

Official Report of the
One Hundred Seventy-ninth
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 4 and 5, 2009

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Report of the 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 4, 2009, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, April 4 and 5, 2009. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 4, at 6:00 p.m.

President Thomas S. Monson presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Saturday morning, priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted the Saturday afternoon session, and President Henry B. Eyring conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were made available. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

General Authorities

First Presidency: Thomas S. Monson, Henry B. Eyring, and Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, and Neil L. Andersen

Presidency of the Seventy: Ronald A. Rasband, Claudio R. M. Costa, Steven E. Snow, Walter F. González, L. Whitney Clayton, Jay E. Jensen, and Donald L. Hallstrom

First Quorum of the Seventy: Marcos A. Aidukaitis, Carlos H. Amado,

Mervyn B. Arnold, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Gérald Caussé, Yoon Hwan Choi, Craig C. Christensen, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Lawrence E. Corbridge, Benjamín De Hoyos, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, David F. Evans, Enrique R. Falabella, Eduardo Gavarret, Carlos A. Godoy, Christoffel Golden Jr., C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, James J. Hamula, Keith K. Hilbig, Richard G. Hinckley, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koelliker, Erich W. Kopischke, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Marcus B. Nash, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Brent H. Nielson, Glenn L. Pace, Allan F. Packer, Kevin W. Pearson, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Rafael E. Pino, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Dale G. Renlund, Michael T. Ringwood, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Joseph W. Sitati, Ulisses Soares, Gary E. Stevenson, Michael John U. Teh, José A. Teixeira, Octaviano Tenorio, Francisco J. Viñas, William R. Walker, F. Michael Watson, Lance B. Wickman, Jorge F. Zaballos, Claudio D. Zivic, and W. Craig Zwick

Second Quorum of the Seventy: Wilford W. Andersen, Koichi Aoyagi, Douglas L. Callister, Tad R. Callister, Craig A. Cardon, Bruce A. Carlson, Shirley D. Christensen, Don R. Clarke, James M. Dunn, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Bradley D. Foster, Daryl H. Garn, Larry W. Gibbons, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, James B. Martino, Clate W. Mask Jr., Robert C. Oaks, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, Kent F. Richards, Gregory A. Schwitzer, W. Douglas Shumway, Lowell M. Snow, Paul K. Sybrowsky, Kent D. Watson, and Robert S. Wood

Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 4, 2009. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir, directed by Mack Wilberg and Edgar Thompson, with Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen as the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang “The Morning Breaks.” President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you to the first session of the 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and extend a special welcome to members and friends participating here in the Conference Center and throughout the world, wherever you may be.

We acknowledge the General Authorities and the general auxiliary presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We are grateful to the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a

public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg and Edgar Thompson, with Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen at the organ. The choir opened this session by singing “The Morning Breaks” and will now favor us with “Press Forward, Saints.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Charles Didier of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Press Forward, Saints.” Elder Charles Didier offered the invocation.

President Monson

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, the choir will sing “Israel, Israel, God Is Calling.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. He will be followed by Sister Margaret S. Lifferth, first counselor in the Primary general presidency. Following her remarks, Brother Michael A. Neider, second counselor in the Young Men organization, will address us.

President Thomas S. Monson

My dear brothers and sisters, as we open this, the 179th Annual General Conference, we note with sadness the absence of Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. We mourn his passing. We miss him. We extend our love to his family. I have no doubt that he is carrying on this great work on the other side of the veil.

Sustaining of new Apostle

Because of the passing of Elder Wirthlin, there exists a vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. After much fasting and prayer, we have called Elder Neil Linden Andersen to fill this vacancy. We present his name to you this morning for your sustaining vote. All those of you who feel you can sustain him in this

sacred calling will please signify by the uplifted hand. Any who may be opposed may signify by the same sign.

We thank you for your sustaining vote. Elder Andersen's name will be included when the officers of the Church are read this afternoon.

Elder Andersen, we invite you now to take your place on the stand with the members of the Twelve. We look forward to hearing from you in the Sunday morning session of conference.

Temple dedications

Since we met six months ago, my brothers and sisters, I have traveled to Mexico City, Mexico, with President and Sister Henry B. Eyring, to rededicate the temple there. For many months it had been undergoing extensive renovations.

The evening before the rededication, a magnificent cultural event was held in the Aztec Stadium. Approximately 87,000 spectators squeezed into the open-air stadium, and a cast of more than 8,000 young people participated in the program, which featured an 80-minute display of music, dance, and Mexican history.

President Eyring and I were each presented a serape and a sombrero. Outfitted in this native costume, I couldn't resist serenading the group with an impromptu version of "El Rancho Grande," which I had originally learned in my ninth-grade Spanish class. I shall not do that today.

Each of the two dedicatory sessions the following day was filled with the Spirit of the Lord.

Just two weeks ago, in 12 sessions we dedicated the Draper Utah Temple, a magnificent structure nestled in the foothills of the mountains in the south portion of the Salt Lake Valley. There were approximately 685,000 people—members and nonmembers alike—who attended the open house. Over 365,000 members were present at the dedicatory sessions, including the sessions broadcast by satellite to various stake centers. The Spirit of

the Lord was present in rich abundance as the temple was dedicated.

In the near future, we will be dedicating the Oquirrh Mountain Utah Temple, and then in the coming months and years there will be many more dedications. We look forward to these occasions. There is something about a temple dedication which prompts a reevaluation of one's own performance and a sincere desire to do even better.

The work of the Lord moves forward

Now, my brothers and sisters, I am pleased to report that the Church is doing very well. The work of the Lord continues to move forward uninterrupted.

We now have approximately 53,000 missionaries serving in 348 missions throughout the world. We take most seriously the Savior's mandate when He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."¹ We are deeply grateful for the labors of our missionaries and for the sacrifices which they and their families make in order for them to serve.

We also have countless volunteers and missionaries in nonproselyting activities. These are generally mature individuals who donate their time and talents in order to further the work of the Lord and to bless our Heavenly Father's children. How thankful we are for the valuable services these individuals are providing.

The Perpetual Education Fund, established in 2001, continues to move forward. Since its inception, 35,600 young men and young women have been enrolled in the program and have trained to improve their skills and their employment opportunities. Thus far, 18,900 have finished that training. On average, with the 2.7 years of education they are now receiving, they are increasing their income by three to four times. What a blessing this is in their lives! This is indeed an inspired program.

My brothers and sisters, I thank you for your faith and devotion to the gospel. I thank you for the love and care you show to one another. I thank you for the service you provide in your wards and branches and in your stakes and districts. It is such service that enables the Lord to accomplish His purposes here upon the earth.

I express my thanks to you for your kindnesses to me wherever I go. I thank you for your prayers in my behalf. I have felt those prayers and am most grateful for them.

Conference messages teach and inspire

Now, my brothers and sisters, we are anxious to listen to the messages which will be presented to us during the next two days, that we might be taught and inspired and have a renewed determination to live the gospel and to serve the Lord. Those who will address us have sought heaven's help and direction as they have prepared their messages. They have been

impressed concerning that which they will share with us.

To those of you who are new in the Church, we welcome you. To those of you who are struggling with challenges or with disappointments or with losses, we pray for you. Our Heavenly Father loves each of us and is mindful of our needs. May we be filled with His Spirit as we listen to that which will be presented. Such is my prayer this morning as we open this great conference. I also add a fond remembrance of President Gordon B. Hinckley, who preceded me as President of the Church. I'm sure he's serving well on the other side. In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. Matthew 28:19.

The choir sang "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling."

Elder Robert D. Hales

How blessed we are to be led by a living prophet! Growing up during the Great Depression, President Thomas S. Monson learned how to serve others. Often his mother asked him to deliver food to needy neighbors, and she would give homeless men odd jobs in exchange for home-cooked meals. Later as a young bishop, he was taught by President J. Reuben Clark, "Be kind to the widow and look after the poor" (see Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 79; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 62). President Monson looked after 84 widows and cared for them until they passed away. Through the years, his service to members and neighbors throughout the world has become the hallmark of his ministry. We are grateful to have his example. Thank you, President Monson.

Brothers and sisters, as did President Monson, our children are growing up in times of economic uncertainty. Just as our grandparents and great-grandparents learned vital lessons through economic adversity, what we learn now, in our present circumstances, can bless us and our posterity for generations to come.

Solution for debt and addiction

Today I speak to all whose freedom to choose has been diminished by the effects of ill-advised choices of the past. I speak specifically of choices that have led to excessive debt and addictions to food, drugs, pornography, and other patterns of thought and action that diminish one's sense of self-worth. All of these excesses

affect us individually and undermine our family relationships. Of course some debt incurred for education, a modest home, or a basic automobile may be necessary to provide for a family. Unfortunately, however, additional debt is incurred when we cannot control our wants and addictive impulses. And for both debt and addiction, the hopeful solution is the same—we must turn to the Lord and follow His commandments. We must want more than anything else to change our lives so that we can break the cycle of debt and our uncontrolled wants. I pray that in the next few minutes, and throughout this conference, you will be filled with hope in our Savior, Jesus Christ, and find hope in the doctrines of His restored gospel.

Our challenges, including those we create by our own decisions, are part of our test in mortality. Let me assure you that your situation is not beyond the reach of our Savior. Through Him, every struggle can be for our experience and our good (see D&C 122:7). Each temptation we overcome is to strengthen us, not destroy us. The Lord will never allow us to suffer beyond what we can endure (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).

We must remember that the adversary knows us extremely well. He knows where, when, and *how* to tempt us. If we are obedient to the promptings of the Holy Ghost, we can learn to recognize the adversary's enticements. Before we yield to temptation, we must learn to say with unflinching resolve, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matthew 16:23).

Our success is never measured by how strongly we are tempted but by how faithfully we respond. We must ask for help from our Heavenly Father and seek strength through the Atonement of His Son, Jesus Christ. In both temporal and spiritual things, obtaining this divine assistance enables us to become provident providers for ourselves and others.

Becoming provident providers

What is a provident provider?

All of us are responsible to provide for ourselves and our families in both temporal and spiritual ways. To provide providently, we must practice the principles of provident living: joyfully living within our means, being content with what we have, avoiding excessive debt, and diligently saving and preparing for rainy-day emergencies. When we live providently, we can provide for ourselves and our families and also follow the Savior's example to serve and bless others.

Being provident providers, we must keep that most basic commandment, "Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:17). Our world is fraught with feelings of entitlement. Some of us feel embarrassed, ashamed, less worthwhile if our family does not have everything the neighbors have. As a result, we go into debt to buy things we can't afford—and things we do not really need. Whenever we do this, we become poor temporally *and* spiritually. We give away some of our precious, priceless agency and put ourselves in self-imposed servitude. Money we could have used to care for ourselves and others must now be used to pay our debts. What remains is often only enough to meet our most basic physical needs. Living at the subsistence level, we become depressed, our self-worth is affected, and our relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and the Lord are weakened. We do not have the time, energy, or interest to seek spiritual things.

Two lessons in provident living

How, then, do we avoid and overcome the patterns of debt and addiction to temporal, worldly things? May I share with you two lessons in provident living that can help each of us. These lessons, along with many other important lessons of my

life, were taught to me by my wife and eternal companion. These lessons were learned at two different times in our marriage—both on occasions when I wanted to buy her a special gift.

The first lesson was learned when we were newly married and had very little money. I was in the air force, and we had missed Christmas together. I was on assignment overseas. When I got home, I saw a beautiful dress in a store window and suggested to my wife that if she liked it, we would buy it. Mary went into the dressing room of the store. After a moment the salesclerk came out, brushed by me, and returned the dress to its place in the store window. As we left the store, I asked, “What happened?” She replied, “It was a beautiful dress, but *we can’t afford it!*” Those words went straight to my heart. I have learned that the three most loving words are “I love you,” and the four most caring words for those we love are “We can’t afford it.”

The second lesson was learned several years later when we were more financially secure. Our wedding anniversary was approaching, and I wanted to buy Mary a fancy coat to show my love and appreciation for our many happy years together. When I asked what she thought of the coat I had in mind, she replied with words that again penetrated my heart and mind. “Where would I wear it?” she asked. (At the time she was a ward Relief Society president helping to minister to needy families.)

Then she taught me an unforgettable lesson. She looked me in the eyes and sweetly asked, “Are you buying this for me or for you?” In other words, she was asking, “Is the purpose of this gift to show your love for me or to show me that you are a good provider or to prove something to the world?” I pondered her question and realized I was thinking less about her and our family and more about me.

After that, we had a serious, life-changing discussion about provident living, and both of us agreed that our money would be better spent in paying down our home mortgage and adding to our children’s education fund.

These two lessons are the essence of provident living. When faced with the choice to buy, consume, or engage in worldly things and activities, we all need to learn to say to one another, “We *can’t* afford it, even though we want it!” or “We *can* afford it, but we don’t *need* it—and we really don’t even want it!”

There is an equally important principle underlying these lessons: we can learn much from communicating with our husbands and wives. As we counsel and work together in family councils, we can help each other become provident providers and teach our children to live providently as well.

Tithes, offerings, family budget

The foundation of provident living is the law of the tithe. The primary purpose of this law is to help us develop faith in our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Tithing helps us overcome our desires for the things of this world and willingly make sacrifices for others. Tithing is the great equitable law, for no matter how rich or poor we are, all of us pay the same one-tenth of our increase annually (see D&C 119:4), and all of us receive blessings so great “that there shall not be room enough to receive [them]” (Malachi 3:10).

In addition to our tithes, we should also be an example with the payment of fast offerings. A fast offering is at least the cost of the two consecutive meals from which we fast each month. By not eating these two meals, we draw close to the Lord in humility and prayer and also participate in anonymous giving to bless our brothers and sisters all over the world.

Another important way we help our children learn to be provident providers is by establishing a family budget. We should regularly review our family income, savings, and spending plan in family council meetings. This will teach our children to recognize the difference between wants and needs and to plan ahead for meaningful use of family resources.

When our boys were young, we had a family council and set a goal to take a “dream vacation” down the Colorado River. When any of us wanted to buy something during the next year, we would ask each other, “Do we really want to buy that thing now, or do we want to take our dream trip later?” This was a wonderful teaching experience in choosing provident living. By not satisfying our every immediate want, we obtained the more desirable reward of family togetherness and fond memories for years to come.

Whenever we want to experience or possess something that will impact us and our resources, we may want to ask ourselves, “Is the benefit temporary, or will it have eternal value and significance?” Truthfully answering these questions may help us avoid excessive debt and other addictive behavior.

Seeking what the Lord alone can provide

In seeking to overcome debt and addictive behaviors, we should remember that addiction is the craving of the natural man, and it can never be satisfied. It is an insatiable appetite. When we are addicted, we seek those worldly possessions or physical pleasures that seem to entice us. But as children of God, our deepest hunger and what we should be seeking is what the Lord alone can provide—His love, His sense of worth, His security, His confidence, His hope in the future, and assurance of His love, which brings us eternal joy.

We must want, more than anything else, to do our Heavenly Father’s will and providently provide for ourselves and others. We must say, as did King Lamoni’s father, “I will give away all my sins to know thee” (Alma 22:18). Then we can go to Him with steadfast determination and promise Him, “I will do whatever it takes.” Through prayer, fasting, obedience to the commandments, priesthood blessings, and His atoning sacrifice, we will feel His love and power in our lives. We will receive His spiritual guidance and strength through the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Only through our Lord’s Atonement can we obtain a mighty change of heart (see Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:14) and experience a mighty change in our addictive behavior.

With all the love I have in me and with the Savior’s love through me, I invite you to come unto Him and hear His words: “Wherefore, do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy. Harken diligently unto me, and remember the words which I have spoken; and come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted” (2 Nephi 9:51).

I testify that the appetite to possess worldly things can only be overcome by turning to the Lord. The hunger of addiction can only be replaced by our love for Him. He stands ready to help each one of us. “Fear not,” He said, “for you are mine, and I have overcome the world” (D&C 50:41).

I bear my special witness that through the Atonement He has overcome all things. May each of us also overcome worldly temptation by coming unto Him and by becoming provident providers both temporally and spiritually for ourselves and others is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Margaret S. Liffert

An appeal for respect and reverence

The last chapter of John tells of an especially tender exchange between Peter and the resurrected Christ. Three times the Savior asks, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” And each time, when Peter assures the Savior of his love, Jesus “saith unto him, Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep.”¹

There is great need in today’s world to nourish the souls of our children and youth with “living water”² and the “bread of life.”³ Like Peter, we too love the Lord, so today’s parents and leaders work diligently to instill in each heart a testimony of Jesus Christ and His gospel. We teach in our homes, in missionary settings, and in the chapels and classrooms of our churches. We prepare and invite the Spirit to be with us. But to truly be able to feed His lambs and nourish His sheep with testimony and the Spirit, we must also cultivate in our homes and classrooms respect for each other and reverence for God.

My appeal today is to parents, teachers, and leaders to work together to teach, exemplify, and encourage the standards of respect and reverence that will strengthen our children and youth and invite the spirit of worship into our homes and chapels.

Respect for each other

May I suggest that our ability and our credibility to exemplify reverence for God are strengthened as we show respect for each other. In today’s society, the standards of decorum, dignity, and courtesy are assailed on every side and in every form of media. As parents and leaders, our examples of respect for each other are critical for our youth and children because they are watching not only the media—they are watching us! Are we the examples we need to be?

Ask yourself these questions: Am I an example of respect in my home by the

way I treat those I love the most? What is my demeanor during a sports event? If my child has a disagreement with a teacher, coach, or peer, do I listen to both sides of the issue? Do I show respect for the property of others as well as take care of my own? How do I respond to others with whom I disagree in matters of religion, lifestyle, or politics?

As parents and leaders exemplify and teach respect for others, we confirm in the hearts of our children that each of us is truly a child of God and all are brothers and sisters through eternity. We will focus on the things we have in common—on the qualities of heart that bind the family of God together—rather than on our differences.

Reverence for God

Respect for others and reverence for God are close cousins. They are rooted in humility and love. President David O. McKay said that “reverence is profound respect mingled with love,”⁴ and Elder L. Tom Perry taught that “reverence flows from our admiration and respect for Deity.”⁵ Primary children learn this concept as they sing this verse from a Primary song:

Rev’rence is more than just quietly
sitting:
It’s thinking of Father above,
A feeling I get when I think of his
blessings.
I’m rev’rent, for rev’rence is love.⁶

However, reverent behavior is not a natural tendency for most children. It is a quality that is taught by parents and leaders through example and training. But remember, if reverence is rooted in love, so is the teaching of it. Harshness in our training begets resentment, not reverence. So begin early and have reasonable expectations. A toddler *can* learn to fold his arms and get ready for prayer. But

it takes time, patience, and consistency. Remember that we are not only teaching a child his first lessons in reverence, but the child may be mastering his first attempts at self-discipline.

This process of teaching and self-discipline continues line upon line and precept upon precept. Thus a child learns to be reverent during prayers and the sacrament. He sits by his parents during the meeting. Then he grows in lessons of self-discipline as later he learns to fast, to obey the Word of Wisdom, to make good Internet choices, and to keep the law of chastity. We each grow in ability as well as understanding. We bless our children and youth as we exemplify, teach, and encourage them through this process, because self-mastery is not only the root of self-respect; it is essential in inviting the Spirit to teach, confirm, and testify.

I remember a talk that President Boyd K. Packer gave in conference almost 20 years ago entitled “Reverence Invites Revelation.”⁷ That phrase has remained in my heart all these years. It reminds me that we *must* create in our hearts, our homes, and our meetings places of reverence that will invite the Spirit to comfort, guide, teach, and testify. Because when the Spirit testifies to each of us that God is our Father and Jesus Christ is our Savior, it is *that* revelation that will invite true reverence born of love and profound respect.

Parents and leaders set example

So, as parents and leaders, what can we do? We can exemplify reverence as we pray humbly, use the proper language of prayer, and speak the names of Deity appropriately. We can handle the scriptures with respect and teach doctrine from them with conviction.

Reverence will increase as we show proper respect not only for the General Authorities but for local priesthood and auxiliary leaders as well. My stake president has been a dear friend for over 30

years, and as friends, we have always called each other by our first names. But because he serves in a calling of priesthood leadership, in public and certainly in a Church setting I make a conscious effort to refer to him as President Porter. Teaching our children and youth that it is appropriate to address our leaders as president, bishop, brother, and sister encourages respect and reverence. It also teaches the truth that leaders are called of God and have been given sacred responsibilities.

As parents and leaders, we *must* set the example of reverent behavior in our Church meetings. Our chapels provide places for many different functions, but on Sunday they are places of worship. We gather to renew covenants that will heal our souls. We come to learn doctrine and strengthen testimony. Missionaries bring their investigators. Only in an attitude of reverence can the Spirit confirm the truths of the gospel through the word of God, music, testimony, and prayer.

We are a friendly people and we love each other, but reverence will increase if our socializing is done in the foyer and if sacrament meeting begins with the prelude music, not the opening prayer. We encourage reverence when we take a crying child out of the chapel and find another room where we continue to listen to the meeting until the baby is calmed or a disruptive toddler is soothed. Reverence includes turning off our cell phones and BlackBerry devices. Texting or reading e-mails in a Church meeting is not only irreverent; it is distracting and signals a lack of respect for those around us. So we exemplify reverence by participating in the meeting, listening to the speakers, and singing the hymns of Zion together.

Ideas for teaching reverence

Our teachers in Primary, Sunday School, and the youth programs have unique opportunities to teach and exemplify respect and reverence. May I offer a few ideas.

First of all, love those in your class. Often the child who is the most disruptive needs your love the most.

Take the time to explain what reverence is and why it is important. Display a picture of the Savior. Define behavior that is acceptable, and then be loving and consistent as you not only encourage it but expect it.

Be prepared. Prepare not only the material, but prepare yourself to teach with the Spirit. Many problems with reverence can be defused with a well-prepared lesson in which the students participate.

Talk with parents of children who have disabilities to determine a reasonable expectation for their child, because every child deserves a chance to progress.

Use the resources of the ward to help. Often if there is a reverence problem with children or youth, there is a reverence problem in the ward. Take concerns to the ward council, where ward leaders can work together to increase respect and reverence on every level.⁸

Years ago President Packer promised the Lord's blessings to those who worship in reverence. Surely those promises apply today: "While we may not see an immediate, miraculous transformation, as surely as the Lord lives, a quiet one will take place. The spiritual power in the

lives of each member and in the Church will increase. The Lord will pour out his Spirit upon us more abundantly. We will be less troubled, less confused. We will find revealed answers to personal and family problems."⁹

I believe the promises of a prophet. I know that I have a loving Heavenly Father and that His Son, Jesus Christ, is my Savior. I pray that our increased reverence will reflect our deepest love for Them and improve our quest to feed Their sheep, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 21:15–17.
2. See John 4:10–14.
3. John 6:48.
4. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1967, 86.
5. L. Tom Perry, in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 90; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 70.
6. "Reverence Is Love," *Children's Songbook*, 31.
7. See Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 26–30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 21–23.
8. See *Teaching, No Greater Call* (1999), 79–87.
9. Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 29–30; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 23.

Michael A. Neider

I love these words of Nephi: "For when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men."¹ It is my prayer that the power of the Holy Ghost will carry my message to your hearts.

"Practise virtue"

May I represent the priesthood holders of the Church and express gratitude to our Church leaders and to the Young Women

general presidency for recently adding virtue as an emphasized value for young women. As I hear the young women of the Church quote the Young Women theme, my desire and commitment to be virtuous and to be holy are strengthened. As bearers of the holy priesthood, we should see that the sisters are not the only examples of virtue.

The Lord has commanded each of us, in section 38 of the Doctrine and Covenants, to be virtuous: "And let every man esteem

his brother as himself, and practise virtue and holiness before me.”²

Revealed quorum principles

I wish to speak today about God’s revealed quorum principles and the inspired direction of latter-day prophets relating to the Aaronic Priesthood. I invite young men ages 12 to 18 and their quorum presidencies to listen, for we will be discussing scripture the Lord has directed to you. I also invite parents and other priesthood leaders to listen so you will have a better understanding of how the quorum assists you in strengthening and preparing God’s sons.

As I begin, I emphasize the principle of study, or obtaining God’s word. I have learned from the example of my wife, Rosemary, that we should become dedicated students. Like many of you, she regularly studies scripture as well as other good books. She is a student of God’s commandments, of successful marriage principles, of good parenting, and of good health. Often with a smile, she gives me a book and says, “Here, you need to read only the underlined parts.” And if she gives me a book about marriage, I smile back and say, “Thank you.”

Brethren, we should be earnest students of revealed priesthood and quorum principles. Our goal is to correctly use inspired direction from God and His prophets to maximize the virtues and blessings of the quorum and strengthen young men and their families. The work of the quorum is to increase faith in Christ, prepare and save young men, and eliminate mistakes and sloth in implementing God’s will. As we seek wisdom from God, let us also be students of revealed quorum principles.

President Monson has taught that the “teaching of fundamentals is urgent. That we might better understand our task and our opportunity” and in order to merit the discernment of the Spirit, priesthood leaders must do their homework.³

President Stephen L. Richards taught that a quorum is a class, a brotherhood, and

a service unit: a class where a young man may be taught the gospel of Jesus Christ; a brotherhood where we can strengthen, build, lift, and friendship each other; and a service unit to give service to quorum members and others.⁴

The Doctrine and Covenants is a significant and abundant source of revealed quorum principles. For example, verse 85 of section 107 instructs a deacons quorum president how to minister to his quorum members: “And again, verily I say unto you, the duty of a president over the office of a deacon is to preside over twelve deacons, to sit in council with them, and to teach them their duty, edifying one another, as it is given according to the covenants.”⁵

Use of inspired questions

Our Church leaders have taught and we have felt the Spirit invite the use of inspired questions given of the Spirit to help us learn of God and His will for us.⁶

I invite quorum presidencies to ask the following questions and seek other questions the Spirit will inspire: What does an Aaronic Priesthood quorum president do to preside over a quorum? What are his duties? What does he do as he sits in council with quorum members? How and when does he teach? What are the covenants referenced in the verses? And what do the quorum adviser and the bishopric member do as each assists the president in his duties and in his use of priesthood keys of presidency?

Brethren, as you study these verses and the handbooks, other questions will come into your hearts. For example: Does my quorum operate as described by the Lord in scripture? If not, why not? And what should I do to appropriately implement revealed quorum principles in my quorum? As a presidency prays for help and guidance, the Spirit, the bishopric, advisers, and the quorum will help and be sure to regularly use the inspired Church handbooks.

Youth leadership

Many quorum presidents and other priesthood leaders throughout the world have discovered that more can be accomplished and expected from Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies and their quorums as they minister in the ward or branch.⁷ More youth leadership can then be exerted by quorum presidencies, while advisers can spend more time in support and leadership training.⁸ As we focus on quorum duties, the frequency of regular quorum presidency meetings usually increases for better preparation and leadership opportunity. Quorum leaders will find that individual Aaronic Priesthood quorums should meet separately after the general priesthood opening exercises for proper age-group instruction and increased quorum leadership opportunities. Any combining of quorums will be viewed as temporary.

Many tools have been given by the Lord and our Brethren to assist in the work of the Aaronic Priesthood quorum, including the mighty prayer of faith, fasting, scripture study, *For the Strength of Youth*, Duty to God, the quorum instruction manual, *Preach My Gospel* as a resource, varied activities, and Scouting. Scouting is used in the United States, Canada, and other places in the world where approved by priesthood leaders.⁹ The presidencies learn to use these tools and weave each one into the quorum and its activities in a way that is directed by the priesthood and the Spirit and that meets the needs of each quorum member and enhances brotherhood, retention, missionary work, and fun.

As we review the tools provided for use by the Aaronic Priesthood quorums, we can see the quorum is expected to help parents strengthen their sons spiritually and in every other facet of their character, activity, and personal lives. As these quorum principles and tools are used with planning and wisdom and in the exercise of faith, miracles will be obtained.

Example of teachers quorum president

There are abundant examples of successful youth leadership occurring minute by minute all over the world. Let me give you just one example.

I met Matt Andersen, a teachers quorum president whose father was serving as a mission president in Mexico. When Matt was set apart as the quorum president, he was the only member of the teachers quorum attending church in his ward. Young President Matt Andersen was learning a new language so he could be an effective missionary. Going forward with faith, courage, and confidence gained at home and in the deacons quorum, he determined to use his keys of presidency to bless the members of his quorum and their families. He immediately asked for a list of quorum members from the ward clerk, practiced his Spanish, and with a prayer in his heart called the one boy who was listed with a telephone number. He said, “¡Omar: Tú, Iglesia, Hoy!” Or in English, “Omar! You, Church, Today!” Just the basic message!

The miracle is that Omar came to church that day, and soon thereafter so did his mother and sister. Our young quorum president, Matt Andersen, then invited the bishop to drive him, translate, and together visit two other boys whose names were on the list but without telephone numbers. His keys of presidency, the ministering of angels, and the powers of heaven combined. The result was that these two boys also came to church and formed the new teachers quorum presidency. Other boys and their families also returned to the blessings of the gospel and the priesthood.

My young brethren and sisters, you are powerful tools in the Savior’s hands, and He can use you to bring the blessings of the gospel to others. Bishops, do not overlook the strength and skill of your Aaronic Priesthood quorum and Young Women class presidencies. The Lord needs them in this important work. There are hearts they can reach and work perhaps only they can

do. Give them assignments! Open doors for their leadership and the ministering of angels as promised in Doctrine and Covenants 13.

May we, as leaders in the Aaronic Priesthood, be students of the life and Atonement of Christ. May we be students of the revealed principles of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums. May we follow the counsel of President Monson to do our homework so we will understand our task and opportunity and merit the Spirit. And, like quorum president Matt Andersen, let us go forward in faith, confidence, and virtue, serving with Christ to help save our families and all of our Heavenly Father's children within our reach.

I give you my witness that Jesus is the Christ, that He lives and loves us, and that the work of the Aaronic Priesthood is a sacred and important part of His work. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 33:1.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 38:24.
3. See Thomas S. Monson, regional representatives' seminar, Apr. 3, 1981, 2.
4. See Stephen L. Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1938, 118; see also L. Tom Perry, in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 24–27; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 23–26; D. Todd Christofferson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 53–56; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 40–42; Robert L. Backman, in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 53–58; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 38–41; Robert L. Backman, in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 109–12; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 84–85.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 107:85; see also verses 86–89.

6. See Henry B. Eyring, “Elder David A. Bednar: Going Forward in the Strength of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2005, 16–21; Neal A. Maxwell, “Jesus, the Perfect Mentor,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2001, 8–17; David A. Bednar, in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 94–97; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 94–97.
7. See Robert L. Backman, Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 53–58; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 38–41; Robert L. Backman, Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 109–12; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 84–85.
8. See Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 55–60; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 43–46; “Aaronic Priesthood,” section 2 of the *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders* (1998), 175–92; see also note 7.
9. See Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 25–29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 19–21; *Scouting Handbook* (1997); see also note 8.

President Monson

We have been spiritually fed.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Now Let Us Rejoice.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder Allan F. Packer of the Seventy will address us, after which we shall hear from Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve. The choir will then sing a favorite of mine, “Consider the Lilies.”

The choir and congregation sang
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

Elder Allan F. Packer

Challenging but wonderful times

Elder Andersen, we extend our love, blessings, and support as you fill this new

calling. Brothers and sisters, individuals and families across the world are challenged by current conditions. While I believe there are serious challenges ahead,

I also know it is a wonderful time to be alive, especially for the youth. I see my children and grandchildren having full, satisfying lives even as they have challenges, setbacks, and obstacles to overcome.

These are the days when prophecies are being fulfilled. We live in the dispensation of the fulness of times, which is the time to prepare for the Savior's return. It is also the time to work out our own salvation.

When the winds blow and the rains pour, they blow and pour on all. Those who have built their foundations on bedrock rather than sand survive the storms.¹ There is a way to build on bedrock by developing a deep personal conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ and knowing how to receive inspiration. We must know—and know that we know. We must stand spiritually and temporally independent of all worldly creatures.² This begins by understanding that God the Father is the Father of our spirits and that He loves us, that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer and Savior, and that the Holy Ghost can communicate with our minds and our hearts.³ This is how we receive inspiration. We need to learn how to recognize and apply these promptings.

Recognizing promptings of the Spirit

When I was a young man in high school, one of my passions was American football. I played middle linebacker. The coach worked the team hard, teaching us the basics. We practiced until the skills became natural and automatic. During one play against our biggest rival, I had an experience that has helped me over the years. We were on defense. I knew my assigned opponent, and as the play unfolded, he moved to my right into the line of scrimmage. There was a lot of noise from players and fans. I reacted as the coach had taught us and followed my man into the line, not knowing if he had the ball. To my surprise, I felt the ball partially in my

hands. I gave it a tug, but my opponent didn't let go. As we tugged back and forth, amid all the noise I heard a voice yelling, "Packer, tackle him!" That was enough to bring me to my senses, so I dropped him on the spot.

I have wondered how I heard that voice above all the other noise. I had become acquainted with the voice of the coach during the practices, and I had learned to trust it. I knew that what he taught worked.

We need to be acquainted with the promptings of the Holy Ghost, and we need to practice and apply gospel teachings until they become natural and automatic. These promptings become the foundation of our testimonies. Then our testimonies will keep us happy and safe in troubled times.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks defined a testimony this way: "A testimony of the gospel is a personal witness borne to our souls by the Holy Ghost that certain facts of eternal significance are true and that we know them to be true."⁴ At another time Elder Oaks said, "Testimony is to know and to feel, conversion is to do and to become."⁵

Conversion and receiving inspiration

There are several things we can do to develop a deep conversion and learn how to receive divine inspiration. First, we must have a desire. Alma said, "For I know that he granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life . . . according to their wills."⁶

Next, Alma challenged us to experiment on the word: "We will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is

a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.”⁷

To study and learn is the next step. This includes pondering, which broadens and deepens our testimonies. “But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right.”⁸

We can learn how answers come through inspiration. They come as thoughts and feelings to our minds and hearts.⁹ Occasionally answers may come as a burning in the bosom. Elijah taught that answers come as a “still small voice.”¹⁰ The Lord said, “And if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.”¹¹

Joseph Smith told us to watch for answers by paying attention to the thoughts and feelings that come into our minds. Over time we will learn to recognize these as promptings.

He said: “A person may profit by noticing the first intimation of the spirit of revelation; for instance, when you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas, so that by noticing it, you may find it fulfilled the same day or soon; (i.e.) those things that were presented unto your minds by the Spirit of God, will come to pass; and thus by learning the Spirit of God and understanding it, you may grow into the principle of revelation, until you become perfect in Christ Jesus.”¹²

Developing this capacity helps us gain testimonies and becomes the means for obtaining additional inspiration in the future.

While testimonies can come as dramatic manifestations, they usually do not. Sometimes people think they need to have an experience like Joseph Smith’s vision before they gain testimonies. If we have unrealistic expectations of how, when, or where answers come, we risk missing the answers which come as quiet, reassuring

feelings and thoughts that most often come after our prayers, while we are doing something else. These answers can be equally convincing and powerful.

Over time we will receive answers and learn how inspiration comes. This is something each person learns for himself.

Prayer and obedience invite inspiration

Next, asking for a testimony of truth opens the window of inspiration. Prayer is the most common and powerful way to invite inspiration. Merely asking a question,¹³ even in our minds, will start to open the window. The scriptures teach, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”¹⁴

Jesus also taught us to apply the doctrine in our lives: “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”¹⁵

In time, a personal witness will come and we will know—and know that we know. We will then be independent of all other worldly things, for “by the power of the Holy Ghost [we] may know the truth of all things”¹⁶ which are right¹⁷ and expedient¹⁸ for us. We will receive strength, comfort, and help to make good decisions and act with confidence in troubled times.¹⁹

This witness is not limited to the leaders but is available to all men, women, youth, and even little children. Having the capacity to receive personal inspiration will be necessary in the coming days.

As a youth I learned that my testimony could grow by fulfilling my priesthood duties. I had a desire to know. I studied and pondered; I prayed for answers. One day while sitting at the sacrament table as a priest, I felt and I knew.

This is a great time to be alive! The Lord needs each of us. This is our day; it is our time! From one of our hymns, we read:

Rise up, O men [*and I add women*]
of God!

Have done with lesser things.

Give heart and soul and mind and
strength

To serve the King of Kings.²⁰

I bear testimony of our Heavenly Father, the Father of our spirits; of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Savior; and of the Holy Ghost, who is the means through which we receive divine guidance. I bear testimony that we can personally receive inspiration. May we know the voice through which that inspiration comes, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Matthew 7:24–27.

2. See Doctrine and Covenants 78:14.

3. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3.

4. Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 25; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 26.

5. Dallin H. Oaks, quoted in Kenneth Johnson, “Coming to Know for Ourselves,” *Ensign*, July 2008, 29.

6. Alma 29:4.

7. Alma 32:28.

8. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.

9. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3.

10. 1 Kings 19:12.

11. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.

12. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 3:381.

13. See Richard G. Scott, “To Learn and to Teach More Effectively,” in *Brigham Young University 2007–2008 Speeches* (2008), 7.

14. Luke 11:9; see also Matthew 7:7; 3 Nephi 14:7; Doctrine and Covenants 88:63–65.

15. John 7:17.

16. Moroni 10:5.

17. See 3 Nephi 18:20.

18. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:64.

19. See Alma 48:15–16.

20. “Rise Up, O Men of God,” *Hymns*, no. 323.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson

May I extend a warm and sincere welcome to Elder Neil L. Andersen to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He is a worthy and welcome addition.

Faith in times of hardship

On August 15, 2007, Peru suffered a massive earthquake that all but destroyed the coastal cities of Pisco and Chincha. Like many other Church leaders and members, Wenceslao Conde, the president of the Balconcito Branch of the Church in Chincha, immediately set about helping others whose homes were damaged.

Four days after the earthquake, Elder Marcus B. Nash of the Seventy was in Chincha helping to coordinate the Church’s relief efforts there and met President Conde. As they talked about the

destruction that had occurred and what was being done to help the victims, President Conde’s wife, Pamela, approached, carrying one of her small children. Elder Nash asked Sister Conde how her children were. With a smile, she replied that through the goodness of God they were all safe and well. He asked about the Condes’ home.

“It’s gone,” she said simply.

“What about your belongings?” he inquired.

“Everything was buried in the rubble of our home,” Sister Conde replied.

“And yet,” Elder Nash noted, “you are smiling as we talk.”

“Yes,” she said, “I have prayed and I am at peace. We have all we need. We have each other, we have our children, we are sealed in the temple, we have

this marvelous Church, and we have the Lord. We can build again with the Lord's help."

This tender demonstration of faith and spiritual strength is repeated in the lives of Saints across the world in many different settings. It is a simple illustration of a profound power that is much needed in our day and that will become increasingly crucial in days ahead. We need strong Christians who can persevere against hardship, who can sustain hope through tragedy, who can lift others by their example and their compassion, and who can consistently overcome temptations. We need strong Christians who can make important things happen by their faith and who can defend the truth of Jesus Christ against moral relativism and militant atheism.

Covenants give access to spiritual power

What is the source of such moral and spiritual power, and how do we obtain it? The source is God. Our access to that power is through our covenants with Him. A covenant is an agreement between God and man, an accord whose terms are set by God (see Bible Dictionary, "Covenant," 651). In these divine agreements, God binds Himself to sustain, sanctify, and exalt us in return for our commitment to serve Him and keep His commandments.

We enter into covenants by priesthood ordinances, sacred rituals that God has ordained for us to manifest our commitment. Our foundational covenant, for example, the one in which we first pledge our willingness to take upon us the name of Christ, is confirmed by the ordinance of baptism. It is done individually, by name. By this ordinance, we become part of the covenant people of the Lord and heirs of the celestial kingdom of God.

Other sacred ordinances are performed in temples built for that very purpose. If we are faithful to the covenants made there, we become inheritors not only of

the celestial kingdom but of exaltation, the highest glory within the heavenly kingdom, and we obtain all the divine possibilities God can give (see D&C 132:20).

The scriptures speak of the new and everlasting covenant. The new and everlasting covenant is the gospel of Jesus Christ. In other words, the doctrines and commandments of the gospel constitute the substance of an everlasting covenant between God and man that is newly restored in each dispensation. If we were to state the new and everlasting covenant in one sentence, it would be this: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Jesus explained what it means to believe in Him: "Now this is the commandment [or in other words, this is the covenant]: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day" (3 Nephi 27:20).

What is it about making and keeping covenants with God that gives us the power to smile through hardships, to convert tribulation into triumph, to "be anxiously engaged in a good cause, . . . and bring to pass much righteousness"? (D&C 58:27).

Strengthened by gifts and blessings

First, as we walk in obedience to the principles and commandments of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we enjoy a continual flow of blessings promised by God in His covenant with us. Those blessings provide the resources we need to act rather than simply be acted upon as we go through life.¹ For example, the Lord's commandments in the Word of Wisdom regarding the care of our physical bodies bless us first and foremost with "wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures" (D&C 89:19). Furthermore, they

lead to a generally more healthy life and freedom from destructive addictions. Obedience gives us greater control over our lives, greater capacity to come and go, to work and create. Of course, age, accident, and illnesses inevitably take their toll, but even so, our obedience to this gospel law enhances our capacity to deal with these challenges.

In the covenant path we find a steady supply of gifts and help. “Charity never faileth” (1 Corinthians 13:8; Moroni 7:46), love begets love, compassion begets compassion, virtue begets virtue, commitment begets loyalty, and service begets joy. We are part of a covenant people, a community of Saints who encourage, sustain, and minister to one another. As Nephi explained, “And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them” (1 Nephi 17:3).²

Strengthened with increased faith

All this is not to say that life in the covenant is free of challenge or that the obedient soul should be surprised if disappointments or even disasters interrupt his peace. If you feel that personal righteousness should preclude all loss and suffering, you might want to have a chat with Job.

This brings us to a second way in which our covenants supply strength—they produce the faith necessary to persevere and to do all things that are expedient in the Lord. Our willingness to take upon us the name of Christ and keep His commandments requires a degree of faith, but as we honor our covenants, that faith expands. In the first place, the promised fruits of obedience become evident, which confirms our faith. Secondly, the Spirit communicates God’s pleasure, and we feel secure in His continued blessing and help. Thirdly, come what may, we can face life with hope and equanimity, knowing that we will succeed in the end because we have God’s promise to us individually, by

name, and we know He cannot lie (see Enos 1:6; Ether 3:12).

Early Church leaders in this dispensation confirmed that adhering to the covenant path provides the reassurance we need in times of trial:

“It was [the knowledge that their course in life conformed to the will of God] that enabled the ancient saints to endure all their afflictions and persecutions, and to take . . . not only the spoiling of their goods, and the wasting of their substance, joyfully, but also to suffer death in its most horrid forms; knowing (not merely believing) that when this earthly house of their tabernacle was dissolved, they had a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2 Cor. 5:1.)” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 67).

They further pointed out that in offering whatever sacrifice God may require of us, we obtain the witness of the Spirit that our course is right and pleasing to God (see *Lectures on Faith*, 69–71). With that knowledge, our faith becomes unbounded, having the assurance that God will in due time turn every affliction to our gain. Some of you have been sustained by that faith as you have endured those who point fingers of scorn from the “great and spacious building” and cry, “Shame!” (see 1 Nephi 8:26–27), and you have stood firm with Peter and the Apostles of old, “rejoicing that [you] were counted worthy to suffer shame for [Christ’s] name” (Acts 5:41).

The Lord said of the Church:

“Verily I say unto you, all among them who . . . are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.

“For I, the Lord, will cause them to bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit” (D&C 97:8–9).

The Apostle Paul understood that one who has entered into a covenant with God

is both given the faith to face trials and gains even greater faith through those trials. Of his personal “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7), he observed:

“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

“Therefore I take pleasure in [my] infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:8–10).³

Strengthened through the “power of godliness”

We have considered, first, the empowering blessings and, second, the endowment of faith that God grants to those who keep their covenants with Him. A final aspect of strength through covenants that I will mention is the bestowal of divine power. Our covenant commitment to Him permits our Heavenly Father to let His divine influence, “the power of godliness” (D&C 84:20), flow into our lives. He can do that because by our participation in priesthood ordinances we exercise our agency and elect to receive it. Our participation in those ordinances also demonstrates that we are prepared to accept the additional responsibility that comes with added light and spiritual power.

In all the ordinances, especially those of the temple, we are endowed with power from on high.⁴ This “power of godliness” comes in the person and by the influence of the Holy Ghost. The gift of the Holy Ghost is part of the new and everlasting covenant. It is an essential part of our baptism, the baptism of the Spirit. It is the messenger of grace by which the blood of Christ is applied to take away our sins and sanctify us (see 2 Nephi 31:17). It is the gift by which Adam was “quickened in the inner man” (Moses 6:65). It was by

the Holy Ghost that the ancient Apostles endured all that they endured and by their priesthood keys carried the gospel to the known world of their day.

When we have entered into divine covenants, the Holy Ghost is our comforter, our guide, and our companion. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are “the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment” (Moses 6:61). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are testimony, faith, knowledge, wisdom, revelations, miracles, healing, and charity, to name but a few (see D&C 46:13–26).

It is the Holy Ghost that bears witness of your words when you teach and testify. It is the Holy Ghost that, as you speak in hostile venues, puts into your heart what you should say and fulfills the Lord’s promise that “you shall not be confounded before men” (D&C 100:5). It is the Holy Ghost that reveals how you may clear the next seemingly insurmountable hurdle. It is by the Holy Ghost in you that others may feel the pure love of Christ and receive strength to press forward. It is also the Holy Ghost, in His character as the Holy Spirit of Promise, that confirms the validity and efficacy of your covenants and seals God’s promises upon you.⁵

Let covenants be paramount

Divine covenants make strong Christians. I urge each one to qualify for and receive all the priesthood ordinances you can and then faithfully keep the promises you have made by covenant. In times of distress, let your covenants be paramount and let your obedience be exact. Then you can ask in faith, nothing wavering, according to your need, and God will answer. He will sustain you as you work and watch. In His own time and way He will stretch forth His hand to you, saying, “Here am I.”

I testify that in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is found the priesthood authority to administer the ordinances by which we can enter into binding covenants with our Heavenly Father in the name of His Holy Son. I testify that God will keep His promises to you as you honor your covenants with Him. He will bless you in “good measure, pressed down, . . . shaken together, and running over” (Luke 6:38). He will strengthen and finish your faith. He will, by His Holy Spirit, fill you with godly power. I pray that you will always have His Spirit to be with you to guide you and deliver you from want, anxiety, and distress. I pray that through your covenants, you may become a powerful instrument for good in the hands of Him who is our Lord and Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. The Prophet Joseph Smith observed, “As God has designed our happiness—and the happiness of all His creatures, He never has—He never will institute an ordinance or give a commandment to His people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which He has designed, and which will not end in the greatest amount of good and glory to those who become the recipients of His law and ordinances” (in *History of the Church*, 5:135).
2. Some see only sacrifice and limitations in obedience to the commandments of the new and everlasting covenant, but those who live the experience—who give themselves freely and unreservedly to the covenant life—find greater liberty and fulfillment. When we truly understand, we seek more commandments, not fewer. Each new law or commandment we learn and live is like one more rung or step on a ladder that enables us to climb higher and higher. Truly, the gospel life is the good life.
3. The Apostle James taught the same lesson:

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into many afflictions;

“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

“But let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (Joseph Smith Translation, James 1:2–4).

4. As the Prophet Joseph petitioned in the prayer dedicating the Kirtland Temple, which prayer was revealed to him by the Lord, “We ask thee, Holy Father, that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them” (D&C 109:22).
5. In the Kirtland Temple dedicatory prayer referenced earlier, the Prophet petitioned, “And do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house . . . may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost” (D&C 109:14–15). The “fulness of the Holy Ghost” includes what Jesus described as “the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom; which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son” (D&C 88:4–5).

The choir sang “Consider the Lilies.”

President Monson

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir and their conductors and organists for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency. Following President Eyring’s remarks, the choir will sing “My Redeemer Lives.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder William W. Parmley of the Seventy, and conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

President Henry B. Eyring

Adversity can seem unfair

My beloved brothers and sisters, this opportunity to speak to you is a great and sacred privilege. I pray that my words may be helpful and give you encouragement.

With all the differences in our lives, we have at least one challenge in common. We all must deal with adversity. There may be periods, sometimes long ones, when our lives seem to flow with little difficulty. But it is in the nature of our being human that comfort gives way to distress, periods of good health come to an end, and misfortunes arrive. Particularly when the comfortable times have gone on for a while, the arrival of suffering or the loss of material security can bring fear and sometimes even anger.

The anger comes at least in part from a feeling that what is happening is unfair. The good health and the serene sense of being secure can become to seem deserved and natural. When they vanish, a feeling of injustice can come. Even a brave man I knew wept and cried out in his physical suffering to those who ministered to him: "I have always tried to be good. How could this happen?"

That aching for an answer to "How could this happen?" becomes even more painful when those struggling include those we love. And it is especially hard for us to accept when those afflicted seem to us to be blameless. Then the distress can shake faith in the reality of a loving and all-powerful God. Some of us have seen such doubt come to infect a whole generation of people in times of war or famine. Such doubt can grow and spread until some may turn away from God, whom they charge with being indifferent or cruel. And if unchecked, those feelings can lead to loss of faith that there is a God at all.

Trials prepare us for eternal life

My purpose today is to assure you that our Heavenly Father and the Savior live and that They love all humanity. The very opportunity for us to face adversity and affliction is part of the evidence of Their infinite love. God gave us the gift of living in mortality so that we could be prepared to receive the greatest of all the gifts of God, which is eternal life. Then our spirits will be changed. We will become able to want what God wants, to think as He thinks, and thus be prepared for the trust of an endless posterity to teach and to lead through tests to be raised up to qualify to live forever in eternal life.

It is clear that for us to have that gift and to be given that trust, we must be transformed through making righteous choices where that is hard to do. We are prepared for so great a trust by passing through trying and testing experiences in mortality. That education can come only as we are subject to trials while serving God and others for Him.

In this education we experience misery and happiness, sickness and health, the sadness from sin and the joy of forgiveness. That forgiveness can come only through the infinite Atonement of the Savior, which He worked out through pain we could not bear and which we can only faintly comprehend.

The Savior's power to comfort

It will comfort us when we must wait in distress for the Savior's promised relief that He knows, from experience, how to heal and help us. The Book of Mormon gives us the certain assurance of His power to comfort. And faith in that power will give us patience as we pray and work and wait for help. He could have known how to succor us simply by revelation, but He chose

to learn by His own personal experience. Here is the account from Alma:

“And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

“And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.

“Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, [so] that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me.”¹

“Peace be unto thy soul”

Even when you feel the truth of that capacity and kindness of the Lord to deliver you in your trials, it may still test your courage and strength to endure. The Prophet Joseph Smith cried out in agony in a dungeon:

“O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?

“How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries?”²

The Lord’s reply has helped me and can encourage us all in times of darkness. Here it is:

“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

“And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.

“Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands.

“Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgression, as they did Job.”³

I have seen faith and courage come from a testimony that it is true that we are being prepared for eternal life. The Lord will rescue His faithful disciples. And the disciple who accepts a trial as an invitation to grow and therefore qualify for eternal life can find peace in the midst of the struggle.

Being spiritually prepared for adversity

I spoke recently to a young father who has lost his job in the recent economic crisis. He knows that hundreds of thousands of people with exactly his skills are looking desperately for work to feed their families. His quiet confidence led me to ask him what he had done to become so confident that he would find a way to support his family. He said he had examined his life to be sure that he had done all he could to be worthy of the Lord’s help. It was clear that his need and his faith in Jesus Christ were leading him to be obedient to God’s commandments when it is hard to do. He said that he saw that opportunity as he and his wife were reading in Alma where the Lord had prepared a people to find the gospel through adversity.

You remember the moment when Alma turned to the man who led the people in distress. The man told him that they had been persecuted and rejected for their poverty. And the record goes:

“And now when Alma heard this, he turned him about, his face immediately towards him, and he beheld with great joy; for he beheld that their afflictions had truly humbled them, and that they were in a preparation to hear the word.

“Therefore he did say no more to the other multitude; but he stretched forth his hand, and cried unto those whom he

beheld, who were truly penitent, and said unto them:

"I behold that ye are lowly in heart; and if so, blessed are ye."⁴

The scripture goes on to praise those of us who prepared for adversity in the more prosperous times. Many of you had the faith to try to qualify for the help you now need, before the crisis came.

Alma continued, "Yea, he that truly humbleth himself, and repenteth of his sins, and endureth to the end, the same shall be blessed—yea, much more blessed than they who are compelled to be humble because of their exceeding poverty."⁵

That young man with whom I spoke recently was one who had done more than put away food and a little savings for the misfortune which living prophets had warned would come. He had begun to prepare his heart to be worthy of the Lord's help which he knew he would in the near future need. When I asked his wife on the day he lost his job if she was worried, she said with cheerfulness in her voice, "No, we've just come from the bishop's office. We are full-tithe payers." Now, it is still too early to tell, but I felt assured as they seemed to be assured: "Things will work out." Tragedy did not erode their faith; it tested it and strengthened it. And the feeling of peace the Lord has promised has already been delivered in the midst of the storm. Other miracles are sure to follow.

Comforting others in need

The Lord always suits the relief to the person in need to best strengthen and purify him or her. Often it will come in the inspiration to do what might seem especially hard for the person who needs help himself. One of the great trials of life is losing to death a beloved husband or wife. President Hinckley described the hurt when Sister Hinckley was no longer at his side. The Lord knows the needs of those separated from loved ones by death. He saw the pain of widows and knew of

their needs from His earthly experience. He asked a beloved Apostle, from the agony of the cross, to care for His widowed mother, who would now lose a son. He now feels the needs of husbands who lose their wives and the needs of wives who are left alone by death.

Most of us know widows who need attention. What touches me is to hear, as I have, of an older widow whom I was intending to visit again having been inspired to visit a younger widow to comfort her. A widow needing comfort herself was sent to comfort another. The Lord helped and blessed two widows by inspiring them to encourage each other. So He gave succor to them both.

The Lord sent help in that same way to the humble poor in Alma 34 who had responded to the teaching and testimony of His servants. Once they had repented and were converted, they were still poor. But He sent them to do for others what they might reasonably have thought was beyond them and which they still needed. They were to give others what they would have hoped He would give them. Through His servant, the Lord gave these poor converts this hard task: "After ye have done all these things, if ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith."⁶

That may seem much to ask of people in such great need themselves. But I know one young man who was inspired to do that very thing early in his marriage. He and his wife were barely getting by on a tiny budget. But he saw another couple even poorer than they were. To the surprise of his wife, he gave help to them from their scanty finances. A promised blessing of peace came while they were still in their poverty. The blessing of prosperity beyond their fondest dreams came

later. And the pattern of seeing someone in need, someone with less or in pain, has never ceased.

“I’m going to make it”

There is yet another trial which, when endured well, can bring blessings in this life and blessings forever. Age and illness can test the best of us. My friend served as our bishop when my daughters were still at home. They speak of what they felt when he bore his simple testimony around campfires in the mountains. He loved them, and they knew it. He was released as our bishop. He had served as a bishop before in another state. Those I have met who were from his earlier ward remember him as my daughters do.

I visited him in his home from time to time to thank him and to give him priesthood blessings. His health began a slow decline. I can’t remember all the ailments he suffered. He needed surgery. He was in constant pain. Yet every time I visited him to give him comfort, he turned the tables; I always was the one comforted. His back and legs forced him to use a cane to walk. Yet there he was in church, always sitting near the door, where he could greet those arriving early, with a smile.

I will never forget the feeling of wonder and admiration which came over me when I opened the back door at home and saw him coming up our driveway. It was the day we put out our garbage cans to be picked up by city workers. I had put the can out in the morning. But there he was dragging my garbage can up the hill with one hand while he balanced himself with a cane in his other hand. He was giving me the help he thought I needed when he needed it far more than I did. And he was helping with a smile and without being asked.

I visited him when he finally had to be cared for by nurses and doctors. He was

lying in a hospital bed, still in pain and still smiling. His wife had called me to say that he was getting weaker. My son and I gave him a priesthood blessing as he lay in the bed with tubes and bottles connected to him. I sealed the blessing with a promise that he would have time and the strength to do all that God had for him to do in this life, to pass every test. He stretched out his hand to grasp mine as I stepped away from his bed to leave. I was surprised at the strength of his grip and the firmness in his voice when he said, “I’m going to make it.”

I left thinking that I would see him again soon. But the phone call came within a day. He was gone to the glorious place where he will see the Savior, who is his perfect judge and will be ours. As I spoke at his funeral, I thought of the words of Paul when he knew that he would go to that place where my neighbor and friend has gone:

“But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”⁷

I have confidence that my neighbor made it through his trial and will face his judge with a joyous smile.

I bear you my testimony that God the Father lives. He set a course for each of us that can polish and perfect us to be with Him. I testify that the Savior lives. His Atonement makes possible our being purified as we keep His commandments and our sacred covenants. And I know from my own experience that He can and will give us strength to rise through every trial.

President Monson is the Lord's prophet. He holds all the keys of the priesthood. This is the Lord's true Church in which we are, with Him, lifting each other and being blessed to succor the fellow sufferers He places in our way. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Alma 7:11–13.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–2.

3. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–10.
4. Alma 32:6–8.
5. Alma 32:15.
6. Alma 34:28.
7. 2 Timothy 4:5–8.

The choir sang "My Redeemer Lives."
Elder William W. Parmley offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 179th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 4, 2009. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined choir from the Salt Lake area institutes of religion. Stephen P. Schank and Richard T. Decker directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you this afternoon to the second session of the 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Uchtdorf, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by a combined choir from the Salt Lake area institutes of religion, under the direction of

Stephen P. Schank and Richard T. Decker, with Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ. The choir will open these services by singing "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Come, Thou Glorious Day of Promise."

Elder Spencer J. Condie offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

President Uchtdorf

The choir just sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

President Monson has asked that I present the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for a sustaining vote. Brother Robert W. Cantwell, managing director of Church Auditing, will then read the Church Auditing Department Report. He will be followed by Brother Brook P. Hales, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the Statistical Report of the Church for the year 2008.

The Sustaining of Church Officers

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Brothers and sisters, it is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Henry Bennion Eyring as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Boyd Kenneth Packer as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, and Neil L. Andersen. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elder Neil L. Andersen as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy. Those who wish to join in a vote of appreciation may so indicate.

It is proposed that we release the following as Area Seventies effective May 1, 2009:

Gutenberg G. Amorím, Wilford W. Andersen, Koichi Aoyagi, José E. Boza, G. Lynn Brenchley, John J. Chipman, Yoon Hwan Choi, Clayton M. Christensen, Ernesto A. Da Silva, James Dunlop, David W. Eka, I. Lee Ence, Edgardo E. Fernando, Luiz C. França, Joseph T. Hicken, Michael H. Holmes, Pita F. Hopoate, Tohru Hotta, William K. Jackson, Bin Kikuchi, Miguel A. Lee, Yong Hwan

Lee, Alfredo Heliton de Lemos, James B. Martino, Lamont W. Moon, Kent H. Murdock, Brent H. Nielson, Alexander A. Nuñez, Russell T. Osguthorpe, Adilson de Paula Parrella, Pedro J. Penha, Errol S. Phippen, Neil E. Pitts, Gary L. Pocock, Dale G. Renlund, Ronald A. Stone, Jean Tefan, and Allen P. Young. Those who wish to join us in expressing our gratitude for their excellent service, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we release Brothers A. Roger Merrill, Daniel K. Judd, and William D. Oswald as the Sunday School general presidency. It is also proposed that we release Brothers Charles W. Dahlquist, Dean R. Burgess, and Michael A. Neider as the Young Men general presidency. We also release all members of the Sunday School and Young Men general boards. All who wish to join us in expressing thanks for the dedicated service given by these brethren, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Donald L. Hallstrom as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy Mervyn B. Arnold, Yoon Hwan Choi, Brent H. Nielson, Dale G. Renlund, Michael T. Ringwood, and Joseph W. Sitati, and as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy Wilford W. Andersen, Koichi Aoyagi, Bruce A. Carlson, Bradley D. Foster, James B. Martino, Kent F. Richards, and Gregory A. Schwitzer. All in favor, please manifest it. If there be any contrary, by the same sign, please.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new Area Seventies:

Manuel M. Agustin, Victor A. Asconavieta, Juan C. Avila, Duck Soo Bae, Dennis C. Brimhall, Thomas M. Cherrington,

Samuel W. Clark, Carl B. Cook, Kevin R. Duncan, Rodolfo C. Franco, Gerrit W. Gong, Mauro Junot, Larry S. Kacher, Von G. Keetch, Katsumi Kusume, German Laboriel, J. Christopher Lansing, David E. LeSueur, Paulo C. Loureiro, Steven J. Lund, Dmitry Marchenko, Abraham Martinez, Hugo E. Martinez, Freebody A. Mensah, Christopher B. Munday, Hirofumi Nakatsuka, Hee Keun Oh, Chikao Oishi, Alejandro S. Patania, Renato M. Petla, Marcos A. Prieto, Jonathan C. Roberts, J. Craig Rowe, Manfred Schütze, Walter C. Selden, T. Marama Tarati, Warren G. Tate, Hesbon O. Usi, Jack D. Ward, and Randy W. Wilkinson. All in favor, please manifest. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Russell Trent Osguthorpe as the new general president of the Sunday School, with David Merrill McConkie as first counselor and Matthew Ottesen Richardson as second counselor. It is proposed that we sustain David LeRoy Beck as the new general president of the Young Men, with

Larry Miner Gibson as first counselor and Adrián Ochoa as second counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may so signify.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

President Monson, insofar as I have been able to observe, the voting in the Conference Center has been unanimous in favor of the proposals made. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote and for your faith, devotion, and prayers.

We invite Elder Hallstrom, the newly called members of the Seventy, and the new Sunday School and Young Men general presidencies to take their places on the stand. We welcome all of them, as well as Elder Andersen, who became this morning the 97th Apostle to serve in this dispensation.

Church Auditing Department Report for 2008

Robert W. Cantwell

To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Dear Brethren:

As prescribed by revelation in section 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes authorizes the expenditure of Church funds. This council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric. This council approves budgets for Church departments and operations. Church departments expend funds consistent with approved budgets and in accordance with Church policies and procedures.

The Church Auditing Department has been granted access to all records and systems necessary to evaluate the adequacy of controls over receipts of funds, expenditures, and safeguarding of Church assets.

The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church departments and operations, and the staff consists of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, certified information systems auditors, and other credentialed professionals.

Based upon audits performed, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received, expenditures made, and assets of the Church for the year

2008 have been recorded and administered in accordance with appropriate accounting practices, approved budgets, and Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Auditing Department
Robert W. Cantwell
Managing Director

Church Statistical Report for 2008

Brook P. Hales

Brothers and sisters, the First Presidency has issued the following report concerning the growth and activity of the Church as of December 31, 2008.

Number of Church units

Stakes 2,818
Missions 348
Districts 622
Wards and branches 28,109

Church membership

Total membership 13,508,509
Increase in children of record
during 2008 123,502
Converts baptized during 2008 . . 265,593

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries 52,494

Temples

Temples dedicated during 2008 4
(Rexburg Idaho, Curitiba Brazil,

Panama City Panama, and Twin Falls Idaho)

Temples rededicated during 2008 I
(Mexico City Mexico)
Temples in operation 128

Prominent Church members who have passed away since last April

*Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Sister Alice Thornley Evans, widow of Elder Richard L. Evans of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Elder J. Thomas Fyans, an emeritus General Authority; Elder Douglas H. Smith, a former member of the Seventy; Sister Harriet Barbara Washburn, wife of Elder J. Ballard Washburn, a former member of the Seventy; and Brother Daniel H. Ludlow, former director of the Church Correlation Department and editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*.*

President Uchtdorf

We shall now hear from Elders M. Russell Ballard and Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

We live in a fascinating and sometimes bewildering time. The other day I mentioned to one of my grandsons that I was going over the text of my conference talk. His face reflected his confusion. "You're going to text your conference talk?" he asked. "I thought you had to give it in the Conference Center."

While for some, texting would be easier, I'm grateful for this opportunity today to speak, because I have a message I feel is important for that grandson and for my other grandchildren, as well as for all of the youth of the Church.

Learning from others' experiences

Years ago when I was in business, I learned a very expensive lesson because I did not listen carefully to the counsel of my father, nor did I heed the promptings of the Spirit giving me guidance from my Heavenly Father. My father and I were in the automobile business, and the Ford Motor Company was looking for dealers to sell their new line of cars. Ford executives invited my father and me to a preview showing of what they thought would be a spectacularly successful product. When we saw the cars, my father, who had over 35 years' experience in the business, cautioned me about becoming a dealer. However, the Ford sales personnel were very persuasive, and I chose to become Salt Lake City's first—and actually last—Edsel dealer. And if you don't know what an Edsel is, ask your grandpa. He will tell you that the Edsel was a spectacular failure.

Now, there's a powerful lesson for all of you in this experience. When you are willing to listen and learn, some of life's most meaningful teachings come from those who have gone before you. They have walked where you are walking and have experienced many of the things you are experiencing. If you listen and respond to their counsel, they can help guide you toward choices that will be for your benefit and blessing and steer you away from decisions that can destroy you. As you look to your parents and others who have gone before you, you will find examples of faith, commitment, hard work, dedication, and sacrifice that you should strive to duplicate.

It's hard to imagine a scenario in which it would not be worthwhile to consider and learn from the experience of others. Many professions require internships, during which aspiring professionals shadow seasoned veterans to learn from their years of experience and accumulated wisdom. Rookies in professional sports are often expected to sit on the bench and learn by

watching experienced players. New missionaries are assigned to work with a senior companion whose experience helps the new missionary learn the right way to effectively serve the Lord.

Of course, there are times when we have no choice but to venture out on our own and do the best we can at figuring things out as we go along. For example, there are *not* a lot of people in my generation whose experience can help when it comes to the most modern of technologies. When we have problems with modern technology, we must look for someone who knows more about it than we do—which usually means turning to one of you young people.

It is my message and testimony to you today, my young friends, that for the most important questions of your eternal lives, there are answers in the scriptures and in the words and testimonies of apostles and prophets. The fact that these words come largely from older men, past and present, doesn't make them any less relevant. In fact, it makes their words even more valuable to you because they come from those who have learned much through years of devout living.

The repeating pattern of history

There is a famous saying attributed to George Santayana. You've probably heard it: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (in John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 15th ed. [1980], 703). There are, in fact, several different variations of this quote, including "Those who do not remember the past are doomed to repeat it." Regardless of the exact language, the sentiment is profound. There are great lessons to be learned from the past, and you ought to learn them so that you don't exhaust your spiritual strength repeating past mistakes and bad choices.

You don't have to be a Latter-day Saint—you don't even have to be religious—to

see the repeating pattern of history in the lives of God's children as recorded in the Old Testament. Time and again we see the cycle of righteousness followed by wickedness. Similarly, the Book of Mormon records that ancient civilizations of this continent followed exactly the same pattern: righteousness followed by prosperity, followed by material comforts, followed by greed, followed by pride, followed by wickedness and a collapse of morality until the people brought calamities upon themselves sufficient to stir them up to humility, repentance, and change.

In the relatively short span of years covered by the New Testament, the historic pattern repeats itself again. This time the people turned against Christ and His Apostles. The collapse was so great we have come to know it as the Great Apostasy, which led to the centuries of spiritual stagnation and ignorance called the Dark Ages.

Now, I need to be very clear about these historically reoccurring periods of apostasy and spiritual darkness. Our Heavenly Father loves all of His children, and He wants them all to have the blessings of the gospel in their lives. Spiritual light is not lost because God turns His back on His children. Rather, spiritual darkness results when His children turn their collective backs on Him. It is a natural consequence of bad choices made by individuals, communities, countries, and entire civilizations. This has been proven again and again throughout the course of time. One of the great lessons of this historical pattern is that our choices, both individually and collectively, do result in spiritual consequences for ourselves and for our posterity.

In every dispensation, God's loving desire to bless His children is manifest in the miraculous restoration of the gospel truth to the earth through living prophets. The Restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith in the early 1800s

is only the most recent example. Similar restorations were accomplished in earlier times through such prophets as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The historical pattern in our time

The 179 years that have passed since The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially organized have been extraordinary by any measure. Never in recorded history has there been a period of such remarkable progress in terms of science and technology. These advances have helped to facilitate gospel growth and expansion throughout the world. But they have also contributed to the rise of materialism and self-indulgence and to the decline of morality.

We live in an era when the boundaries of good taste and public decency are being pushed to the point where there are no boundaries at all. The commandments of God have taken a beating in the vacillating marketplace of ideas that absolutely rejects the notion of right and wrong. Certain factions of society seem generally mistrustful of anyone who chooses to live according to religious belief. And when people of faith attempt to warn others of the possible consequences of their sinful choices, they are scoffed at and ridiculed, and their most sacred rites and cherished values are publicly mocked.

Does any of this sound familiar, my young brothers and sisters? Do you see the historical pattern emerging again—the pattern of righteousness followed by prosperity, followed by material comforts, followed by greed, followed by pride, followed by wickedness and a collapse of morality—the same pattern we've seen again and again within the pages of the Old and New Testaments and the Book of Mormon? More importantly, what impact will the lessons of the past have on the personal choices you make right now and for the rest of your lives?

Learning from past is a choice

The voice of the Lord is clear and unmistakable. He knows you. He loves you. He wants you to be eternally happy. But according to your God-given agency, the choice is yours. Each one of you has to decide for yourself if you are going to ignore the past and suffer the painful mistakes and tragic pitfalls that have befallen previous generations, experiencing for yourself the devastating consequences of bad choices. How much better your life will be if you will follow the noble example of the faithful followers of Christ—such as the sons of Helaman, Moroni, Joseph Smith, and the stalwart pioneers—and choose, as they did, to remain faithful to your Heavenly Father's commandments.

With all my heart I hope and pray that you will be wise enough to learn the lessons of the past. You don't have to spend time as a Laman or a Lemuel in order to know that it's much better to be a Nephi or a Jacob. You don't have to follow the path of Cain or Gadianton in order to realize that "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10). And you don't have to allow your community to become like Sodom or Gomorrah in order to understand that it isn't a good place to raise a family.

Personal faith and testimony

Learning the lessons of the past allows you to walk boldly in the light without running the risk of stumbling in the darkness. This is the way it's supposed to work. This is God's plan: father and mother, grandfather and grandmother teaching their children; children learning from them and then becoming a more righteous generation through their own personal experiences and opportunities. Learning the lessons of the past allows

you to build personal testimony on a solid bedrock of obedience, faith, and the witness of the Spirit.

Of course, it's not enough to learn these lessons as a matter of history and culture. Learning the names and dates and sequence of events from the printed page won't help you very much unless the meaning and the message are written in your hearts. Nourished by testimony and watered with faith, the lessons of the past can take root in your hearts and become a vibrant part of who you are.

And so it returns, as it always does, to your own personal faith and testimony. That is the difference-maker, my young brothers and sisters. That is how you know. That is how you avoid the mistakes of the past and take your spirituality to the next level. If you are open and receptive to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit in your lives, you will understand the lessons of the past, and they will be burned into your souls by the power of your testimonies.

And how do you get such a testimony? Well, there's no new technology for that, nor will there ever be. You cannot do a Google search to gain a testimony. You can't text message faith. You gain a vibrant, life-changing testimony today the same way it has always been done. The process hasn't been changed. It comes through desire, study, prayer, obedience, and service. That is why the teachings of prophets and apostles, past and present, are as relevant to your life today as they ever have been.

That you may find joy and happiness and peace in the future by learning the great and eternal lessons of the past is my prayer for each of you—for my grandchildren and all of the youth of the Church, wherever you may be—which I offer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Quentin L. Cook

This mortal life can constitute a difficult journey, but the destination is truly glorious. Christ expressed this to His disciples: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good *cheer*; I have overcome the world.”¹

My objective this afternoon is twofold: first, to address some stumbling blocks to faith; and second, to describe how our Father’s plan is big enough for all His children.

During the past two years in the United States and across the world, there has been a dramatic increase in the discussion of our faith and beliefs. This is not new; it has happened periodically throughout the history of the Church.

Dickens reports on Latter-day Saints

In 1863 Charles Dickens, the English novelist, went on board the passenger ship *Amazon*, which was bound for New York. His purpose was to report on the Latter-day Saint converts who were emigrating to build up the Church in the American West. There had been thousands of converts who had already emigrated, and much had been written, particularly in the British media, about them and their beliefs. Most of what was written was unfavorable.

“I went on board their ship,” wrote Dickens, “to bear testimony against them if they deserved it, as I fully believed they would; to my great astonishment they did not deserve it.”²

After observing and mingling with the converts, Dickens was impressed with them and described these English converts, most of whom were laborers, as being “in their degree, the pick and flower of England.”³

Differing reports about the Church

There have been two contrasting reports with respect to the Church. On one hand, righteous members and the way they live

their lives have generally been reported on favorably. Those who know Latter-day Saints personally or have the opportunity to observe them up close have the same view that Charles Dickens reported almost 150 years ago.

Because of the uplifting doctrine of the Restoration, members rejoice in the gospel and find joy and satisfaction in the Church. We are viewed favorably when we live the teachings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. When members don’t live the teachings, it can be a stumbling block to those who do not belong to the Church.⁴

Unlike the favorable reports on righteous members, descriptions of the Church and its doctrine have often been untrue, unfair, and harsh. It should be acknowledged that some descriptions of Christianity in general have also been very harsh.⁵

This attitude toward our doctrine does not come as a surprise. In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord indicated that there would be some who “lift up their voices and curse God,”⁶ and some “turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men.”⁷

Recent bus ads in London demonstrate the polarization that exists concerning religion in general. Some atheists, agnostics, and nonbelievers paid to display large posters on red double-decker buses in London that said, “There’s probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.” Opposing ads by Christians asserted, “There definitely is a God,” followed by uplifting messages.⁸

Nonbelievers find it hard to accept the miracles of the Old and New Testaments and the Savior’s virgin birth and Resurrection. They view these events with the same skepticism as the appearance of God the Father and Jesus Christ to the Prophet Joseph Smith. They are not open to the possibility of a heavenly plan presided over by a supreme being. They do not have faith.⁹

Doctrine of revelation

My principal concern is for the honorable people on the earth who are open to religious faith but have been discouraged or confused by incorrect doctrine. For instance, with respect to the doctrine that revelation still exists, some very good people have been confident that the Church could not be true because they have been taught, and therefore believe, that the heavens are closed and there will be no additional revelation, no scripture, and no pronouncements from heaven. Let me emphasize that this widely held belief is not scriptural, but it is a stumbling block to some.¹⁰

In a recent best-selling book, the author uses as his principal analogy the interesting fact that for centuries all Europeans believed that all swans were white. It wasn't until the discovery of Australia that swans of a different color were discovered. The author uses this analogy to help explain events which have actually occurred but were not expected.¹¹ As I thought about this analogy, I realized that many people have refused to seriously investigate the Church because they believe there can be no revelation in this dispensation. One convert, who is now serving as a mission president, describes how difficult this was for him when he was investigating the Church. He said, "I had been taught all my life that there would never again be prophets and apostles here upon the earth. So to accept Joseph Smith as a prophet created a large stumbling block." However, when he prayed, he states, "I received a witness that in fact the gospel had been restored to the earth and that Joseph Smith was truly a prophet of God."¹²

Teachings about hell

For many of these people who are open to religious faith, one issue has been particularly troubling. They have had a difficult time reconciling the correct doctrine

that we have a loving Father in Heaven and the incorrect doctrine that most of mankind would be doomed to eternal hell.

This was an issue with my great-great-grandfather Phineas Wolcott Cook. He was born in 1820 in Connecticut. In his diary he notes that he had made a covenant with the Lord to serve Him if he could find the right way. He attended many churches and at one was asked to "testify [and] join the church [and] be a Christian." His response was he "could not tell which one to join, there were so many." He continued to investigate several churches. One doctrine was of particular significance to him. He explained: "Sometimes they found fault with me because I wanted a more liberal salvation for the family of man. I could not believe the Lord had made a part to be saved and a great part to be damned to all eternity."¹³ Because of this doctrine, he allowed his name to be taken off the records of one Protestant religion. When the LDS missionaries taught him the true doctrine of the plan of salvation in 1844, he was baptized.

Phineas's faith in the loving mercy of the Lord and His plan of happiness has been shared by many honorable men and women, even when the teachings of their own churches were very bleak.

The Anglican church leader and classical scholar Frederic Farrar, the author of *The Life of Christ*, lamented in lectures in Westminster Abbey that the common teachings of the Protestant churches with respect to hell were incorrect. He asserted that a definition of hell which included endless torment and everlasting damnation was the result of translation errors from Hebrew and Greek to English in the King James Version of the Bible. Farrar also noted the overwhelming demonstration of a loving Father in Heaven throughout the Bible as additional evidence that the definitions of hell and damnation used in the English translation were incorrect.¹⁴

Lord Tennyson, in his poem "In Memoriam," expressed his heartfelt

sentiment after noting that “we trust that somehow good will be the final goal of ill.” He continued:

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy’d,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete.¹⁵

Salvation through the Atonement

At the time Joseph Smith received revelations and organized the Church, the vast majority of churches taught that the Savior’s Atonement would *not* bring about the salvation of most of mankind. The common precept was that a few would be saved and the overwhelming majority would be doomed to endless tortures of the most awful and unspeakable intensity.¹⁶ The marvelous doctrine revealed to the Prophet Joseph unveiled to us a plan of salvation that is applicable to all mankind, including those who do not hear of Christ in this life, children who die before the age of accountability, and those who have no understanding.¹⁷

At death, righteous spirits live in a temporary state called paradise. Alma the Younger teaches us “paradise [is] a state of rest, a state of peace, where [the righteous] shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow.”¹⁸ The unrighteous spirits dwell in spirit prison, sometimes referred to as hell.¹⁹ It is described as an awful place, a dark place where those fearful of the “indignation of the wrath of God” shall remain until the resurrection.²⁰ However, because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all spirits blessed by birth will ultimately be resurrected, spirit and body reunited, and inherit kingdoms of glory that are superior to our existence here on earth.²¹ The exceptions are confined to those who, like Satan and his angels, willfully rebel against God.²² At the resurrection, the spirit prison or hell will deliver up its captive spirits. Jesus came

into the world “to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness.”²³

The Savior said: “Let not your heart be troubled. . . . In my Father’s house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you.”²⁴ A succinct summary is provided in the book of Moses: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”²⁵

Respect for those of other faiths

After all the Savior has suffered for mankind, it is not surprising that in speaking of existing churches in the First Vision, He would instruct Joseph to “join none of them, for they were all wrong.”²⁶ The Savior subsequently ushered in the Restoration of His true doctrine with respect to the plan of salvation and other saving principles such as the doctrine of Christ.²⁷

But notwithstanding the significance of our doctrinal differences with other faiths, our attitude toward other churches has been to refrain from criticism. They do much good. They bless mankind. Many help their members learn of the Savior and His teachings.

A reporter for the *Washington Post* visited one of our Church meetings in Nigeria. The reporter interviewed one new member and told of his conversion. The reporter states:

[He] said . . . he jumped off a city bus and walked into the [LDS Church building]. He immediately liked what he heard inside [the chapel], especially that no one preached that people of other faiths were going to hell.”²⁸ This echoes the feeling of numerous converts to the Church since its organization.

Our leaders have consistently counseled us “to live with respect and appreciation for those not of our faith. There is so great a need for civility and mutual

respect among those of differing beliefs and philosophies.”²⁹

It is equally important that we be loving and kind to members of our own faith, regardless of their level of commitment or activity. The Savior has made it clear that we are not to judge each other.³⁰ This is especially true of members of our own families. Our obligation is to love and teach and never give up. The Lord has made salvation “free for all men” but has “commanded his people that they should persuade all men to repentance.”³¹

Glorious destination

The desire of our hearts, of course, is not only to acquire salvation and immortality but also to attain eternal life with a loving Father in Heaven and our Savior in the celestial kingdom with our families. We can obtain eternal life only through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.³² The Savior said, “For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me.”³³

Those early European converts that Dickens met on board the ship *Amazon* had overcome many stumbling blocks. They had a testimony that revelation comes from heaven and that prophets and apostles are again on the earth. They had faith in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

They had come to understand the sublime destination that was in store for them. They were not fearful of the arduous journey they were undertaking, and their ultimate destination was not really the Salt Lake Valley. Their true destination was paradise followed by exaltation in the celestial kingdom.

That is why Latter-day Saints then and now sing the last verse of “Come, Come, Ye Saints” with faith and expectation.

And should we die before our journey’s
through,
Happy day! All is well!

We then are free from toil and sorrow,
too;

With the just we shall dwell!³⁴

A loving Father has provided a comprehensive and compassionate plan for His children “that saves the living, redeems the dead, rescues the damned, and glorifies all who repent.”³⁵ Even though our journey may be fraught with tribulation, the destination is truly glorious.

I rejoice in the great plan of salvation that is big enough for all of our Father in Heaven’s children. I express gratitude beyond my ability to articulate for the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I bear my witness of Him in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 16:33; italics added.
2. Charles Dickens, “The Uncommercial Traveller,” *All the Year Round*, July 4, 1863, 449; see also David M. W. Pickup, *The Pick and Flower of England* (2001), 2.
3. Dickens, “The Uncommercial Traveller,” 446.
4. See Alma 4:10.
5. See Paul Johnson, “Militant Atheism and God,” *Forbes*, Oct. 8, 2007, 27; John Gray, “Faith in Reason: Secular Fantasies of a Godless Age,” *Harper’s Magazine*, Jan. 2008, 86.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 45:32.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 45:29.
8. See William Lee Adams, “Christians and Atheists Battle in London Bus Wars,” *Time*, Feb. 8, 2009, www.time.com.
9. See Luke 18:8.
10. Some have mistakenly cited Revelation 22:18, but this has reference to the book of Revelation, not the Bible as a whole. See also Deuteronomy 4:2.
11. See Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (2007), xvii–xxviii.
12. Gary G. Ely, May 16, 2008, conversation preparatory to his service as president of the Colorado Denver North Mission.

13. In Newell Cook McMillan, comp., *The Life and History of Phineas Wolcott Cook* (1980), 19–20; spelling and punctuation standardized.
14. See Frederic W. Farrar, *Eternal Hope* (1892), xxxvi–xlii. For an expanded discussion of this topic, see H. Wallace Goddard, “God’s Plan—Kinder Than We Dare to Expect,” *Meridian Magazine*, www.ldsmag.com/myth/060217plan.html.
15. *Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Henry Frowde (1907), 387–88.
16. See Frederic W. Farrar, *Eternal Hope*, xxii.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 29:46–50; 137:7–10.
18. Alma 40:12.
19. See 2 Nephi 9:10–14; Doctrine and Covenants 76:84–86.
20. See Alma 40:14.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:89.
22. See Isaiah 14:12–15; Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:7–9; Doctrine and Covenants 76:32–37.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 76:41; see also 1 Corinthians 15:22.
24. John 14:1–2.
25. Moses 1:39.
26. Joseph Smith—History 1:19; see also verse 20.
27. See 2 Nephi 31:2–21; see also Hebrews 6:1–2; 2 John 1:9–10; 3 Nephi 11:30–40.
28. Mary Jordan, “The New Face of Global Mormonism,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 19, 2007, p. A01.
29. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 94; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 71.
30. See Luke 6:37.
31. 2 Nephi 26:27.
32. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:1.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 93:20.
34. “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30.
35. Orson F. Whitney, *Saturday Night Thoughts* (1921), 323.

President Uchtdorf

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now sing “Let Us All Press On.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Kevin W. Pearson and Rafael E. Pino of the Seventy will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang “Let Us All Press On.”

Elder Kevin W. Pearson

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

I humbly invite the companionship of the Holy Ghost as we discuss a vital principle of the gospel: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I acknowledge with deep appreciation and love great examples of true faith and faithfulness in my own life. To goodly parents, family, priesthood leaders, beloved missionaries, wonderful children, and a precious eternal companion, I express my deepest love and gratitude. I acknowledge my own need and desire for

greater faith as a disciple and witness of Christ. There has never been a greater need for faith in my own life than now.

As parents, we have been commanded to teach our children “to understand the doctrine of . . . faith in Christ the Son of the living God” (D&C 68:25). This requires more than merely recognizing faith as a gospel principle. “To have faith is to have confidence in something or someone” (Bible Dictionary, “Faith,” 669). True faith must be centered in Jesus Christ. “Faith is a principle of action and of power” (Bible

Dictionary, 670). It requires us to do, not merely to believe. Faith is a spiritual gift from God that comes through the Holy Ghost. It requires a correct understanding and knowledge of Jesus Christ, His divine attributes and perfect character, His teachings, Atonement, Resurrection, and priesthood power. Obedience to these principles develops complete trust in Him and His ordained servants and assurance of His promised blessings.

There is no other thing in which we can have absolute assurance. There is no other foundation in life that can bring the same peace, joy, and hope. In uncertain and difficult times, faith is truly a spiritual gift worthy of our utmost efforts. We can give our children education, lessons, athletics, the arts, and material possessions, but if we do not give them faith in Christ, we have given little.

Obedience and faith

“Faith is kindled by hearing the testimony of those who have faith” (Bible Dictionary, 669; see also Romans 10:14–17). Do your children know that you know? Do they see and feel your conviction? “Strong faith is developed by obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Bible Dictionary, 669).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “*Faith is a gift of God bestowed as a reward for personal righteousness*. It is always given when righteousness is present, and the greater the measure of obedience to God’s laws the greater will be the endowment of faith” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 264; italics in original). If we desire more faith, we must be more obedient. When we teach our children by example or precept to be casual or situational in obeying God’s commandments, we prevent them from receiving this vital spiritual gift. Faith requires an attitude of exact obedience, even in the small, simple things.

Desire is a particle of faith that develops within us as we experience divine truth. It

is like spiritual photosynthesis. The influence of the Holy Ghost, acting on the Light of Christ within every human being, produces the spiritual equivalent of a chemical reaction—a stirring, a change of heart, or a desire to know. Hope develops as particles of faith become molecules and as simple efforts to live true principles occur.

As patterns of obedience develop, the specific blessings associated with obedience are realized and belief emerges. Desire, hope, and belief are forms of faith, but faith as a principle of power comes from a consistent pattern of obedient behavior and attitudes. Personal righteousness is a choice. Faith is a gift from God, and one possessed of it can receive enormous spiritual power.

There is a quality of faith which develops as we focus all of our heart, might, mind, and strength. It is seen and felt in the eyes of a great missionary, a valiant and virtuous young woman, and righteous mothers, fathers, and grandparents. It can be seen in the lives of individuals young and old, in every land and culture, speaking every language, in every circumstance and station in life. It is the “eye of faith” spoken of by the prophet Alma (see Alma 5:15–26)—the ability to focus and be steadfast, continually holding fast to true principles, nothing wavering, even when the mist of darkness confronting us is exceedingly great. This quality of faith is exceedingly powerful.

Faith versus doubt

However, “it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. . . . The Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other” (2 Nephi 2:11, 16). And so it is with faith. It can be enticing to choose doubt and disbelief over faith.

As Jesus returned from the transcendent spiritual experience on the Mount

of Transfiguration, He was approached by a desperate father whose son needed help. The father pleaded, “If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.”

Jesus replied, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

“And straightway the father . . . cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:22–24).

Faith and fear cannot coexist. One gives way to the other. The simple fact is we all need to constantly build faith and overcome sources of destructive disbelief. The Savior’s teaching comparing faith to a grain of mustard seed recognizes this reality (see Matthew 13:31–32). Consider it this way: our net usable faith is what we have left to exercise after we subtract our sources of doubt and disbelief. You might ask yourself this question: “Is my own net faith positive or negative?” If your faith exceeds your doubt and disbelief, the answer is likely positive. If you allow doubt and disbelief to control you, the answer might be negative.

We do have a choice. We get what we focus on consistently. Because there is an opposition in all things, there are forces that erode our faith. Some are the result of Satan’s direct influence. But for others, we have no one but ourselves to blame. These stem from personal tendencies, attitudes, and habits we can learn to change. I will refer to these influences as the “Six Destructive Ds.” As I do, consider their influence on you or your children.

The Six Destructive Ds

First is *doubt*. Doubt is not a principle of the gospel. It does not come from the Light of Christ or the influence of the Holy Ghost. Doubt is a negative emotion related to fear. It comes from a lack of confidence in one’s self or abilities. It is inconsistent with our divine identity as children of God.

Doubt leads to *discouragement*. Discouragement comes from missed expectations. Chronic discouragement leads to lower expectations, decreased effort, weakened desire, and greater difficulty feeling and following the Spirit (see *Preach My Gospel* [2004], 10). Discouragement and despair are the very antithesis of faith.

Discouragement leads to *distraction*, a lack of focus. Distraction eliminates the very focus the eye of faith requires. Discouragement and distraction are two of Satan’s most effective tools, but they are also bad habits.

Distraction leads to a *lack of diligence*, a reduced commitment to remain true and faithful and to carry on despite hardship and disappointment. Disappointment is an inevitable part of life, but it need not lead to doubt, discouragement, distraction, or lack of diligence.

If not reversed, this path ultimately leads to *disobedience*, which undermines the very basis of faith. So often the result is disbelief, the conscious or unconscious refusal to believe.

The scriptures describe *disbelief* as the state of having chosen to harden one’s heart. It is to be past feeling.

These Six Destructive Ds—*doubt, discouragement, distraction, lack of diligence, disobedience, and disbelief*—all erode and destroy our faith. We can choose to avoid and overcome them.

Promise of spiritual power

Challenging times require greater spiritual power. Consider carefully the Savior’s promise: “If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me” (Moroni 7:33).

I humbly declare that God, our Heavenly Father, lives and loves each of us, His children. Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. He lives and personally leads His Church through President Monson, His anointed prophet. Because He lives,

there is always hope smiling brightly before us. In a household of faith, there is no need to fear or doubt. Choose to live

by faith and not fear. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Rafael E. Pino

Finding comfort amid tragedy

One morning some years ago, I received a telephone call from Brother Omar Alvarez, who at the time served as one of my counselors in the bishopric. His three-year-old daughter had died in a tragic accident.

He related the account of what happened that day as follows:

“As soon as we arrived at one of the beautiful Venezuelan beaches, our children begged us to let them go out and play in a small river near the beach. We allowed them to go. Then we started to get some things out of the car. Two minutes later we noticed that our children were starting to get too far from the shore.

“As we went toward them to bring them closer, we noticed that our three-year-old daughter was not with the other children. We looked for her desperately, only to find her floating near the place where the other children were. We quickly pulled her out of the water. Some people came to try to help save her, but nothing could be done. Our youngest daughter had drowned.

“The moments that followed were extremely difficult, filled with anguish and pain for the loss of our youngest daughter. That feeling soon turned into an almost unbearable torment. However, in the midst of the confusion and uncertainty, the thought that our children had been born under the covenant came to our minds, and through that covenant, our daughter belongs to us for eternity.

“What a blessing it is to belong to the Church of Jesus Christ and to have received the ordinances of His holy temple! We now feel that we are much more

committed to be faithful to the Lord and endure to the end, because we want to be worthy of the blessings that the temple provides in order to see our daughter again. At times we mourn, but ‘we do not mourn as those without hope’ (Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:554).”

This faithful family came to understand that when adversity arrives in our lives, the only true source of comfort is God. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

The light of the gospel brings peace

Several years after the difficult trial the Alvarez family faced, I witnessed how another faithful family dealt with great adversity. Several members of the Quero family had died in a terrible car accident. Brother Abraham Quero lost his parents, two sisters, his brother-in-law, and his niece in that accident.

Brother Quero showed an admirable attitude when he said the following:

“This was the time to show loyalty to God and to acknowledge that we depend on Him, that His will must be obeyed, and that we are subject to Him.

“I spoke to my brothers and gave them strength and courage to understand what President Kimball taught many years ago, that ‘there is no tragedy in death, but only in sin’ (Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 101), and that the important thing is not how a man died but how he lived.

“The words of Job filled my soul: ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken

away; blessed be the name of the Lord' (Job 1:21). And then from Jesus: 'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live' (John 11:25).

"This was one of the most spiritual experiences we had as a family—to accept the will of God under such very difficult circumstances."

In both of the experiences that these good families endured, pain and sorrow left because of the light of the gospel, which filled them with peace and comfort, providing the assurance that everything would be well.

The Savior suffered all things

Even when the pain of these families cannot be compared to the agony the Lord endured in Gethsemane, it has enabled me to better understand the Savior's suffering and Atonement. There is no infirmity, affliction, or adversity that Christ did not feel in Gethsemane.

The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith the following in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

"Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men" (D&C 19:18–19).

The Prophet Joseph Smith, who knew a lot about the storms of life, exclaimed in anguish during one of his most difficult moments: "O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?" (D&C 121:1).

Then, as the Prophet raised his voice, the consoling words of the Lord attended him, saying:

"My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes" (D&C 121:7–8).

President Howard W. Hunter said: "If our lives and our faith are centered on Jesus Christ and his restored gospel, nothing can ever go permanently wrong. On the other hand, if our lives are not centered on the Savior and his teachings, no other success can ever be permanently right" (*The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1997], 40).

The gospel prepares us to face adversity

The Savior said:

"Therefore, whoso heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock—

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand—

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it" (3 Nephi 14:24–27).

It is interesting to notice that the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew against both houses! Living the gospel does not mean that we will everlastingly escape adversity. Rather, it means that we will be prepared to face and endure adversity more confidently.

I bear solemn witness that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. He directs His Church through a living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. If we live our lives in accordance with teachings of the Savior, we will surely find the peace and consolation that only God can give (see Philippians 4:7). I bear witness of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Plan to attend the temple

Each member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is blessed to live in a time when the Lord has inspired His prophets to provide significantly increased accessibility to the holy temples. With careful planning and some sacrifice, the majority of the members of the Church can receive the ordinances of the temple for themselves and for their ancestors and be blessed by the covenants made therein.

Because I love you, I am going to speak to you heart to heart, without mincing words. I have seen that many times individuals have made great sacrifices to go to a distant temple. But when a temple is built close by, within a short time, many do not visit it regularly. I have a suggestion: When a temple is conveniently nearby, small things may interrupt your plans to go to the temple. Set specific goals, considering your circumstances, of when you can and will participate in temple ordinances. Then do not allow anything to interfere with that plan. This pattern will guarantee that those who live in the shadow of a temple will be as blessed as are those who plan far ahead and make a long trip to the temple.

Fourteen years ago I decided to attend the temple and complete an ordinance at least once a week. When I am traveling I make up the missed visits in order to achieve that objective. I have kept that resolve, and it has changed my life profoundly. I strive to participate in all the different ordinances available in the temple.

I encourage you to establish your own goal of how frequently you will avail yourself of the ordinances offered in our operating temples. What is there that is more important than attending and participating in the ordinances of the temple? What activity could have a greater impact and

provide more joy and profound happiness for a couple than worshipping together in the temple?

Gaining more benefit from the temple

Now I share some additional suggestions of how to gain more benefit from temple attendance.

- Understand the doctrine related to temple ordinances, especially the significance of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.¹
- While participating in temple ordinances, consider your relationship to Jesus Christ and His relationship to our Heavenly Father. This simple act will lead to greater understanding of the supernal nature of the temple ordinances.
- Always prayerfully express gratitude for the incomparable blessings that flow from temple ordinances. Live each day so as to give evidence to Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son of how very much those blessings mean to you.
- Schedule regular visits to the temple.
- Leave sufficient time to be unhurried within the temple walls.
- Rotate activities so that you can participate in all of the ordinances of the temple.
- Remove your watch when you enter a house of the Lord.
- Listen carefully to the presentation of each element of the ordinance with an open mind and heart.
- Be mindful of the individual for whom you are performing the vicarious ordinance. At times pray that he or she will recognize the vital importance of the ordinances and be worthy or prepare to be worthy to benefit from them.

- Recognize that much of the majesty of the sealing ordinance cannot be understood and remembered with one live experience. Substantial subsequent vicarious work permits one to understand much more of what is communicated in the live ordinances.
- Realize that a sealing ordinance is not enduring until after it is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise. Both individuals must be worthy and want the sealing to be eternal.

If as a couple you have not yet been sealed in the temple, consider this scripture:

“In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

“And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

“And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

“He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase” (D&C 131:1–4).

Temple work and our ancestors

Sometimes when I hear a choir during a temple dedicatory service, I experience a feeling so sublime that it elevates my heart and mind. I close my eyes, and more than once, in my mind, I have seen an inverted cone of individuals beginning at the temple and rising upward. I have felt that they represent many spirits waiting for the vicarious work to be done for them in that sanctuary, rejoicing because finally there is a place that can free them from the chains that hold them back in their eternal progress. In order to achieve this end, you will need to do the vicarious work. You will need to identify your ancestors. The new FamilySearch™ program makes the effort easier than before. It is necessary to identify those ancestors, qualify them, and come to the house of the Lord to perform the ordinances they are longing to receive.

What a joy it is to be able to participate in the work of a temple!

I would like to relate the experience of an ancestor of my wife, Jeanene. Her name is Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich. Her commentary shows the impact that the temple can have in our lives. When she was 31 years old, she received a calling from Brigham Young to work in the Nauvoo Temple, where all the ordinances possible were performed before the Saints had to abandon that temple. This is what she wrote:

“Many were the blessings we had received in the house of the Lord, which has caused us joy and comfort in the midst of all our sorrows and enabled us to have faith in God, knowing He would guide us and sustain us in the unknown journey that lay before us. For if it had not been for the faith and knowledge that was bestowed upon us in that temple by the influence and help of the Spirit of the Lord, our journey would have been like one taking a leap in the dark. To start out on such a journey in the winter as it were and in our state of poverty, it would seem like walking into the jaws of death. But we had faith in our Heavenly Father, and we put our trust in Him, feeling that we were His chosen people and had embraced His gospel, and instead of sorrow, we felt to rejoice that the day of our deliverance had come.”²

Temple ordinances offer assurances

Now I would like to speak of the special meaning the temple has for me. Part of this message is going to be sensitive, so I will appreciate your prayers as I give it so that I do not become too emotional.

Fourteen years ago the Lord took my wife beyond the veil. I love her with all my heart, but I have never complained, because I know it was His will. I have never asked why but rather what is it that He wants me to learn from this experience. I believe that is a good way to face the unpleasant things in our lives, not

complaining but thanking the Lord for the trust He places in us when He gives us the opportunity to overcome difficulties.

We had the blessing of having children. A daughter, the first child, continues to be an enormous blessing in our lives. A couple of years later a son we named Richard was born. A few years later a daughter was born. She died after living only a few minutes.

Our son, Richard, was born with a heart defect. We were told that unless that could be cured, there was little probability that he would live more than two or three years. This was so long ago that techniques now used to repair such defects were unknown. We had the blessing of having a place where doctors agreed to attempt to perform the needed surgery. The surgery had to be done while his little heart was beating.

The surgery was performed just six weeks after the birth and death of our baby daughter. When the operation finished, the principal surgeon came in and said it was a success. And we thought, "How wonderful! Our son will have a strong body, be able to run and walk and grow!" We expressed deep gratitude to the Lord. Then about 10 minutes later, the same doctor came in with an ashen face and told us, "Your son has died." Apparently the shock of the operation was more than his little body could endure.

Later, during the night, I embraced my wife and said to her, "We do not need to worry, because our children were born in the covenant. We have the assurance that we will have them with us in the future. Now we have a reason to live extremely well. We have a son and a daughter who have qualified to go to the celestial kingdom because they died before the age of eight." That knowledge has given us great comfort. We rejoice in the knowledge that all seven of our children are sealed to us for time and all eternity.

That trial has not been a problem for either of us, because when we live

righteously and have received the ordinances of the temple, everything else is in the hands of the Lord. We can do the best we can, but the final outcome is up to Him. We should never complain, when we are living worthily, about what happens in our lives.

No reason to worry

Fourteen years ago the Lord decided it was not necessary for my wife to live any longer on the earth, and He took her to the other side of the veil. I confess that there are times when it is difficult not to be able to turn and talk to her, but I do not complain. The Lord has allowed me, at important moments in my life, to feel her influence through the veil.

What I am trying to teach is that when we keep the temple covenants we have made and when we live righteously in order to maintain the blessings promised by those ordinances, then come what may, we have no reason to worry or to feel despondent.

I know that I will have the privilege of being with that beautiful wife, whom I love with all my heart, and with those children who are with her on the other side of the veil, because of the ordinances that are performed in the temple. What a blessing to have once again on the earth the sealing authority, not only for this mortal life but for the eternities. I am grateful that the Lord has restored His gospel in its fulness, including the ordinances that are required for us to be happy in the world and to live everlastingly happy lives in the hereafter.

This is the work of the Lord. Jesus Christ lives. This is His Church. I am a witness of Him and of His Atonement, which is the foundation that makes effective and lasting every ordinance performed in the temples. I so testify with every capacity I possess, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Sections 88, 109, 131, and 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants would be a good place to begin.
2. Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich, "Autobiography, 1885–93," Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, 66; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization standardized.

President Uchtdorf

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence here in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from

9:30 to 10:00 mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank the combined choir from the Salt Lake area institutes of religion for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Sing We Now at Parting." At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Douglas L. Callister of the Seventy.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

With you, my dear brothers and sisters, I express love and admiration for Elder Neil L. Andersen. His call to the holy apostleship has come from the Lord as revealed to His prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. Throughout his life, President Monson has refined his ability to hearken to the will of the Lord. As the Savior submitted His will to Heavenly Father, so the prophet submits his will to the Lord. Thank you, President Monson, for developing and using that power. We congratulate you, Elder Andersen, and we pray for you!

The Lord's Prayer

Our prayers follow patterns and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. He taught us how to pray. From His prayers we can learn many important lessons. We can begin with the Lord's Prayer and add lessons from other prayers He has given.¹

As I recite the Lord's Prayer, listen for lessons:

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

"Give us this day our daily bread.

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."²

The Lord's Prayer is recorded twice in the New Testament and once in the Book of Mormon.³ It is also included in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible,⁴ where clarification is provided by these two phrases:

1. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,"⁵ and
2. "Suffer us not to be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil."⁶

The clarification on forgiveness is supported by other statements of the Master. He said to His servants, "Inasmuch as you have forgiven one another your trespasses, even so I, the Lord, forgive you."⁷ In other words, if one is to be forgiven, one must first forgive.⁸ The clarification on

temptation is helpful, for surely we would *not* be led into temptation by Deity. The Lord said, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”⁹

Though the four versions of the Lord’s Prayer are not identical, they all open with a salutation to “Our Father,” signifying a close relationship between God and His children. The phrase “hallowed be thy name” reflects the respect and worshipful attitude that we should feel as we pray. “Thy will be done” expresses a concept that we will discuss later.

His request for “daily bread” includes a need for spiritual nourishment as well. Jesus, who called Himself “the bread of life,” gave a promise: “He that cometh to me shall never hunger.”¹⁰ And as we partake of sacramental emblems worthily, we are further promised that we may always have His Spirit to be with us.¹¹ That is spiritual sustenance that cannot be obtained in any other way.

As the Lord closes His prayer, He acknowledges God’s great power and glory, ending with “Amen.” Our prayers also close with *amen*. Though it is pronounced differently in various languages, its meaning is the same. It means “truly” or “verily.”¹² Adding *amen* solemnly affirms a sermon or a prayer.¹³ Those who concur should each add an audible *amen*¹⁴ to signify “that is my solemn declaration too.”¹⁵

The Lord prefaced His prayer by first asking His followers to avoid “vain repetitions”¹⁶ and to pray “after this manner.”¹⁷ Thus, the Lord’s Prayer serves as a pattern to follow and not as a piece to memorize and recite repetitively. The Master simply wants us to pray for God’s help while we strive constantly to resist evil and live righteously.

Intercessory prayers

Other prayers of the Lord are also instructive, especially His intercessory prayers. They are so named because the Lord prayerfully interceded with His

Father for the benefit of His disciples. Picture in your mind the Savior of the world kneeling in prayer, as I quote from John chapter 17:

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, . . . glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. . . .

“ . . . I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. . . .

“For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

“I pray for them.”¹⁸

From this prayer of the Lord we learn how keenly He feels His responsibility as our Mediator and Advocate with the Father.¹⁹ Just as keenly, we should feel our responsibility to keep His commandments and endure to the end.²⁰

An intercessory prayer was also given by Jesus for the people of ancient America. The record states that “no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father.”²¹ Then Jesus added: “Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.”²²

In a later prayer, Jesus included a plea for unity. “Father,” He said, “I pray unto thee for them, . . . that they may believe in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one.”²³ We too can pray for unity. We can pray to be of one heart and one mind with the Lord’s anointed and with our loved ones. We can pray for mutual understanding and respect between ourselves and our neighbors. If we really care for others, we should pray for them.²⁴ “Pray one for another,” taught James, for “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”²⁵

Lessons from other prayers

Other lessons about prayer were taught by the Lord. He told His disciples that “ye

must always pray unto the Father in my name.”²⁶ The Savior further emphasized, “Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name.”²⁷ Obediently, we apply that lesson when we pray to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ.²⁸

Another of the Lord’s prayers teaches a lesson repeated in three consecutive verses:

“Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen. . . .

“Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words.

“Father, thou hast given them the Holy Ghost because they believe in me.”²⁹

If companionship of the Holy Ghost is that important, we should pray for it too. We should likewise help all converts and our children cultivate the gift of the Holy Ghost. As we so pray, the Holy Ghost can become a vital force for good in our lives.³⁰

Enhancing our prayers

The Lord has taught ways by which our prayers can be enhanced. For example, He said that “the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.”³¹

Prayer can also be enhanced by fasting.³² The Lord said, “I give unto you a commandment that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth.”³³ A plea for wisdom in fasting was offered by President Joseph F. Smith, who cautioned that “there is such a thing as overdoing. A man may fast and pray till he kills himself; and there isn’t any necessity for it; nor wisdom in it. . . . The Lord can hear a simple prayer, offered in faith, in half a dozen words, and he will recognize fasting that may not continue more than twenty-four hours, just as readily and as effectually as He will answer a prayer of a thousand words and fasting for a month. . . . The Lord will accept that which

is enough, with a good deal more pleasure and satisfaction than that which is too much and unnecessary.”³⁴

The concept of “too much and unnecessary” could also apply to the length of our prayers. A closing prayer in a Church meeting need not include a summary of each message and should not become an unscheduled sermon. Private prayers can be as long as we want, but public prayers ought to be short supplications for the Spirit of the Lord to be with us or brief declarations of gratitude for what has transpired.

Our prayers can be enhanced in other ways. We can use “right words”³⁵—special pronouns—in reference to Deity. While worldly manners of daily dress and speech are becoming more casual, we have been asked to protect the formal, proper language of prayer. In our prayers we use the respectful pronouns *Thee*, *Thou*, *Thy*, and *Thine* instead of *You*, *Your*, and *Yours*.³⁶ Doing so helps us to be humble. That can also enhance our prayers. Scripture so declares, “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers.”³⁷

Prayer begins with individual initiative. “Behold,” saith the Lord, “I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”³⁸ That door is opened when we pray to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ.³⁹

When should we pray? Whenever we desire! Alma taught, “Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, . . . and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.”⁴⁰ Jesus reminded His disciples “that they should not cease to pray in their hearts.”⁴¹

“Thy will be done”

The practice of Church members is to kneel in family prayer each morning and evening, plus having daily personal prayers and blessings on our food.⁴² President Monson said, “As we offer unto the Lord our family and our personal prayers, let us do so with faith and trust in Him.”⁴³ And so, in praying for temporal and spiritual blessings, we should all plead, as did Jesus in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy will be done.”⁴⁴

Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world—He who ransomed us with His blood—is our Redeemer and our Exemplar.⁴⁵ At the close of His mortal mission, He prayed that His will—as the Beloved Son—might be swallowed up in the will of the Father.⁴⁶ In that crucial hour the Savior cried, “Father, . . . not as I will, but as thou wilt.”⁴⁷ So we should pray to God, “Thy will be done.”

And let us ever pray “that [the Lord’s] kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants . . . may . . . be prepared for the days . . . [when] the Son of Man shall come down . . . in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth.”⁴⁸

In our daily lives and in our own crucial hours, may we fervently apply these precious lessons from the Lord, I pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. The January 1976 issue of the *Ensign* was published as a “Special Issue on Prayer.” The sincere student of prayer will gain much from a study of those articles.
2. Matthew 6:9–13.
3. See Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4; 3 Nephi 13:9–13.
4. See Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:9–15.
5. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:13.
6. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:14.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 82:1.
8. See Matthew 18:23–35; Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
9. Matthew 26:41.
10. John 6:35; see also John 6:48, 51.
11. See Moroni 4:3; 5:2; Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
12. In the Hebrew and Greek languages, *amen* means “truly,” “surely,” “verily,” or “so be it.”
13. See Revelation 1:18; 22:20–21. It is also used in confirming agreements (see 1 Kings 1:36).
14. See 1 Corinthians 14:16.
15. See Psalm 106:48; Revelation 5:13–14; 19:4; Doctrine and Covenants 88:135.
16. Matthew 6:7; 3 Nephi 13:7.
17. Matthew 6:9; 3 Nephi 13:9.
18. John 17:1, 4, 8–9.
19. See 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1; Doctrine and Covenants 29:5; 45:3; 110:4.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
21. 3 Nephi 17:17.
22. 3 Nephi 17:20.
23. 3 Nephi 19:23.
24. See Matthew 5:44; Alma 34:27; 3 Nephi 18:21.
25. James 5:16.
26. 3 Nephi 18:19.
27. 3 Nephi 18:21.
28. See 2 Nephi 32:9; 33:12; 3 Nephi 18:23, 30; 19:6–7; 20:31; 28:30.
29. 3 Nephi 19:20–22.
30. See John 10:27–28 (compare D&C 84:43–47); 2 Nephi 31:17–20; Alma 5:38. And we may invite the companionship of the Spirit, who will intercede and help us know what to pray about (see Romans 8:26).
31. Doctrine and Covenants 25:12.
32. See Acts 14:23; 1 Corinthians 7:5; Omni 1:26; Alma 5:46; 6:6; 17:3, 9; 28:6; 45:1; 3 Nephi 27:1; 4 Nephi 1:12; Moroni 6:5.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 88:76.
34. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, Oct. 1912, 133–34.
35. Joseph Smith Translation, Psalm 17:1.
36. See Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 201; Stephen L. Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1951, 175; Bruce R. McConkie, “Why the Lord Ordained Prayer,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, 12; L. Tom Perry, in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, 14–15; or *Ensign*,

- Nov. 1983, 13; and Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 16–20; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 15–18. Details of the language of prayer are explained by Don E. Norton Jr., “The Language of Formal Prayer,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, 44–47.
37. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10; see also Psalm 24:3–4; Matthew 6:12; Helaman 3:35; Doctrine and Covenants 64:8–10.
38. Revelation 3:20.
39. See 3 Nephi 18:20; Doctrine and Covenants 88:64.
40. Alma 37:37; see also Philippians 4:6; Alma 34:18–27; Doctrine and Covenants 10:5; 93:49.
41. 3 Nephi 20:1.
42. See *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, 11.
43. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 2007, 65; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 61.
44. See Matthew 26:42; Jacob 7:14; Ether 12:29; Doctrine and Covenants 109:44; Moses 4:2.
45. See 3 Nephi 27:13–15, 21–22.
46. See Mosiah 15:7.
47. Matthew 26:39; see also Moses 4:2, which indicates the humble attitude of our Savior from the beginning.
48. Doctrine and Covenants 65:5.

The choir sang “Sing We Now at Parting.”

Elder Douglas L. Callister offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 179th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 4, 2009. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

A priesthood choir from Brigham Young University–Idaho provided the music. Kevin Brower and Randall Kempton directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, Assembly Hall, BYU Marriott Center, Provo Missionary Training Center, and other locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be provided by a priesthood choir from Brigham Young University–Idaho, under the direction of Kevin Brower and Randall Kempton, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Sing Praise to Him.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Sing Praise to Him.”

Elder Bruce D. Porter offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing “Father in Heaven.” Following the singing, we will hear from President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric. He will be followed by Elder

Claudio R. M. Costa of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Father in Heaven."

President Boyd K. Packer

To Aaronic Priesthood holders

Young men speak of the future because they have no past, and old men speak of the past because they have no future. I am an old man, but I will speak to the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood about your future.

The Aaronic Priesthood you hold was restored by an angelic messenger. "The ordination was done by the hands of an angel, who announced himself as John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament. The angel explained that he was acting under the direction of Peter, James, and John, the ancient apostles, who held the keys of the higher priesthood, which was called the Priesthood of Melchizedek."¹

"The power and authority of the lesser, or Aaronic Priesthood, is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels, and to administer in outward ordinances, the letter of the gospel, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, agreeable to the covenants and commandments."²

You have been ordained to an office in the priesthood of God and given divine authority that is not and cannot be held by the kings and magistrates and great men of this earth unless they humble themselves and enter through the gate that leads to life eternal.

There are many accounts in the scriptures of young men serving. Samuel served in the tabernacle with Eli.³ David was a young man when he faced Goliath.⁴ Mormon's service began when he was 10.⁵ Joseph Smith was 14 when he received the First Vision.⁶ And Christ was 12 when

He was found in the temple teaching the wise men.⁷

Paul told young Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth."⁸

Teaching young people

When I began my teaching career, President J. Reuben Clark Jr., the First Counselor in the First Presidency, had spoken to teachers. His words went into my heart and influenced me ever since.

President Clark described youth as "hungry for things of the Spirit [and] eager to learn the gospel." He said: "They want it straight, undiluted. They want to know . . . about our beliefs; they want to gain testimonies of their truth. They are not now doubters but inquirers, seekers after truth."

President Clark continued: "You do not have to sneak up behind this spiritually experienced youth and whisper religion in [their] ears; you can come right out, face to face, and talk with [them]. . . . You can bring these truths to [them] openly. . . . There is no need for gradual approaches."⁹

Since then I have taught young people in the same way that I teach adults.

Hope from a patriarchal blessing

There are some things you need to understand.

The priesthood is something you cannot see nor hear nor touch, but it is a real authority and a real power.

When I was five years old, I became very ill. It turned out that I had polio, a disease that was completely unknown to

the small-town doctor. I lay for several weeks on a World War I army cot in our front room beside a coal stove. Afterward, I could not walk. I remember very clearly sliding around on the linoleum floor and pulling myself up on chairs, learning to walk again. I was more fortunate than some. A friend walked with crutches and steel leg braces all of his life.

As I moved into school, I found that my muscles were weak. I was very self-conscious. I knew that I could never be an athlete.

It did not help a lot when I read about the man who went to a doctor to find a cure for his inferiority complex. After a careful examination, the doctor told him, “You don’t have a complex. You really *are* inferior!”

With that for encouragement, I set about through life and determined to compensate in other ways.

I found hope in my patriarchal blessing. The patriarch, whom I had never met before, confirmed to me that patriarchs do have prophetic insight. He said that I had a desire to come to earth life and was willing to meet the tests that would accompany life in a mortal body. He said that I had been given a body of such physical proportion and fitness to enable my spirit to function through it unhampered by physical impediment. That encouraged me.

Take care of your body

I learned that you should always take care of your body. Take nothing into your body that will harm it, such as we are counseled in the Word of Wisdom: tea, coffee, liquor, tobacco, or anything else that is habit-forming, addictive, or harmful.

Read section 89 in the Doctrine and Covenants. You will find great promises:

“All saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

“And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

“And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.”

And then this promise: “And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them.”¹⁰

You may see others who seem to have been given a more perfect body than yours. Do not fall into the trap of feeling poorly about your height or weight or your features or your skin color or race.

You are a son of God. You lived in a premortal existence as an individual spirit child of heavenly parents. At the time of your birth, you received a mortal body of flesh and blood and bone in which to experience earth life. You will be tested as you prepare yourself to return to our Heavenly Father.

I ask you the same question that Paul asked the Corinthians: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”¹¹

Resist evil influences

Your gender was determined in the premortal existence. You were born a male. You must treasure and protect the masculine part of your nature. You must have respectful, protective regard for all women and girls.

Do not abuse yourself. Never allow others to touch your body in a way that would be unworthy, and do not touch anyone else in any unworthy way.

Avoid the deadly poisons of pornography and narcotics. If these are in your life, beware! If allowed to continue, they can destroy you. Talk to your parents; talk to your bishop. They will know how to help you.

Do not decorate your body with tattoos or by piercing it to add jewels. Stay away from that.

Do not run with friends that worry your parents.

Everywhere present is the influence of Lucifer and his legion of angels. They tempt you to do those things and say those things and think those things that would destroy. Resist every impulse that will trouble your spirit.¹²

You are not to be fearful. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “all beings who have bodies have power over those who have not.”¹³ And Lehi taught that all “men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil.”¹⁴ Remember, the prayerful power of your spirit will protect you.

The power of the Atonement

I remember when I was “[baptized] by immersion for the remission of sins.”¹⁵ That was appealing. I assumed that all my past mistakes were now washed away, and if I never made any more mistakes in my life, I would be clean. This I resolved to do. Somehow it did not turn out that way. I found that I made mistakes, not intentionally, but I made them. I once foolishly thought maybe I was baptized too soon. I did not understand that the ordinance of the sacrament, administered by you of the Aaronic Priesthood, is in fact a renewing of the covenant of baptism and the reinstating of the blessings connected with it. I did not see, as the revelations tell us, that I could “retain a remission of [my] sins.”¹⁶

If you have been guilty of sin or mischief, you must learn about the power of the Atonement, how it works. And with deeply sincere repentance, you can unleash that power. It can rinse out all the small things, and with deep soaking and scrubbing, it will wash away serious transgression. There is nothing from which you cannot be made clean.

With you always is the Holy Ghost, which was conferred upon you at the time of your baptism and confirmation.

The value of learning

I was a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood when World War II exploded upon the world. I was ordained an elder when we were all marched away to war.

I had dreams of following an older brother, Leon, who at that time was flying B-24 bombers in the Battle of Britain. I volunteered for air force pilot training.

I failed the written test by one point. Then the sergeant remembered that there were several two-point questions, and if I got half right on two of them, I could pass.

Part of the test was multiple choice. One question was “What is ethylene glycol used for?” If I had not worked in my dad’s service station, I would not have known that it is used for automobile anti-freeze. And so I passed, barely.

I prayed about the physical. It turned out to be fairly routine.

You young men should not complain about schooling. Do not immerse yourself so much in the technical that you fail to learn things that are practical. Everything you can learn that is practical—in the house, in the kitchen cooking, in the yard—will be of benefit to you. Never complain about schooling. Study well, and attend always.

“The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.”¹⁷

“Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.”¹⁸

We are to learn about “things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven.”¹⁹

You can learn about fixing things and painting things and even sewing things and whatever else is practical. That is worth doing. If it is not of particular benefit to you, it will help you when you are serving other people.

The truth will see you through

I ended up in the Orient, flying the same kind of bombers that my brother flew in England. My mission, as it turned out, was in teaching the gospel in Japan as a serviceman.

Perhaps the hardest challenge of war is living with uncertainties, not knowing how it will end or if we can go ahead with our lives.

I was issued a small serviceman's Book of Mormon that would fit into my pocket. I carried it everywhere; I read it; and it became part of me. Things that had been a question became certain to me.

The certainties of the gospel, the truth, once you understand it, will see you through these difficult times.

It was four years before we could return to our lives. But I had learned and had a sure testimony that God is our Father, that we are His children, and that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true.

Your generation is filled with uncertainties. A life of fun and games and expensive toys has come to an abrupt end. We move from a generation of ease and entertainment to a generation of hard work and responsibility. We do not know how long that will last.

The reality of life is now part of your priesthood responsibilities. It will not hurt you to want something and not have it. There is a maturing and disciplining that will be good for you. It will ensure that you can have a happy life and raise a happy family. These trials come with responsibility in the priesthood.

Some of you live in countries where most of what you eat and some of what you wear will depend on what can be produced by the family. It may be that what you can contribute will make the difference so that the rent is paid or the family is fed and housed. Learn to work and to support.

The very foundation of human life, of all society, is the family, established by the first commandment to Adam and Eve,

our first parents: "Multiply, and replenish the earth."²⁰

Thereafter came the commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."²¹

Be a responsible member of your family. Take care of your possessions—your clothing, your property. Do not be wasteful. Learn to be content.

It may seem that the world is in commotion; and it is! It may seem that there are wars and rumors of wars; and there are! It may seem that the future will hold trials and difficulties for you; and it will! However, fear is the opposite of faith. Do not be afraid! I do not fear.

At noon today four young men, all grandsons, came to visit us. Three of them had young ladies on their arms—one to talk about his coming wedding, two of them to announce their engagements, and the stray to talk about his mission call to Japan. We talked to them about the fact that one day each of you will take a pure and precious daughter of our Heavenly Father to the temple to be sealed for time and for all eternity. These young grandsons must know what Alma taught: that the gospel plan is "the great plan of happiness"²² and that happiness is the end of our existence. Of this I bear testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Introduction to Doctrine and Covenants 13.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 107:20.
3. See 1 Samuel 1:24–28.
4. See 1 Samuel 17.
5. See Mormon 1:2.
6. See Joseph Smith—History 1:7.
7. See Luke 2:41–52.
8. 1 Timothy 4:12.
9. J. Reuben Clark Jr., *The Charted Course of the Church in Education* (address delivered to seminary and institute leaders at Aspen Grove, Utah, Aug. 8, 1938, pamphlet, 2004), 3, 9.

10. Doctrine and Covenants 89:18–21.
11. 1 Corinthians 6:19.
12. See Moroni 7:17.
13. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 211.
14. 2 Nephi 2:5.
15. Articles of Faith 1:4.
16. Mosiah 4:12.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 93:36.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 130:18.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 101:34.
20. Genesis 1:28; Abraham 4:28.
21. Exodus 20:12.
22. Alma 42:8.

Bishop Richard C. Edgley

Responding to disasters

My brethren of the priesthood, in recent years we have witnessed many emergencies and natural disasters throughout the world. Among them have been hurricanes, wildfires, earthquakes, and a devastating tsunami.

The Church has responded to these and many other disasters in marvelous ways. Groups of members have quickly mobilized to go and help those in need. They all felt good knowing they were blessing the lives of others through their service.

Often, individuals who are not of our faith—members of other churches, relief organizations, governments, and the news media—comment on how quickly the Church is able to mobilize so many who are willing to help. They ask, “How do you do it?” The response to this question can be simply stated as “We are prepared, we have organization, we have empathy, and we have charity.” It usually just takes a few phone calls from presiding authorities to local leaders to mobilize hundreds and sometimes thousands of individuals to go to the rescue of their fellow brothers and sisters in distress.

Current economic challenge

Tonight I wish to speak of another challenge to which we have opportunities to respond, and brethren, *this is your phone call*. This challenge is not one of natural causes; however, its effects are real and are being felt globally. And while we are

optimistic about the future, we continue—as we have for decades—to espouse the fundamental principle that we are our brother’s keeper.

Elder Robert D. Hales has recently observed: “The economic clouds that have long threatened the world are now fully upon us. The impact of this economic storm on our Heavenly Father’s children requires a gospel vision of welfare today more than ever before.”¹ The unemployment and financial wakes of this storm are splashing over every stake and every ward throughout the Church. I suspect they have been felt in some way by each of us, whether personally—through members of our families or extended families—or through someone we know.

Quorums can make a difference

Brethren, there is no organization better able to respond to the challenges of humanity than the priesthood of the Most High God. We have the organization. Stake presidents, bishops, elders quorum presidents, and high priests group leaders—we now call upon you to mobilize our priesthood quorums in response to the employment and financial challenges facing our members. *Consider this your personal phone call*. Now is the time to rally around, lift up, and help the families in our quorums who may be in distress.

Opportunities abound, and yours is the opportunity and responsibility of marshaling the Lord’s resources. Among our quorum members, you will likely find those

who know of job openings and others who are skilled at writing résumés or assisting in interview preparation. Regardless of titles or skills, you will find a brotherhood committed to bear one another's burdens.

President Monson tells the story of a retired executive named Ed who lived the example of a quorum member. On one occasion President Monson was speaking with Ed and asked him, "'Ed, what are you doing in the Church?' He replied, 'I have the best assignment in the ward. My responsibility is to help men who are unemployed find permanent employment. This year I have helped 12 of my brethren who were out of work to obtain good jobs. I have never been happier in my entire life.'" President Monson continues: "Short in stature, 'Little Ed,' as we affectionately called him, stood tall that evening as his eyes glistened and his voice quavered. He showed his love by helping those in need. He restored human dignity. He opened doors for those who knew not how to do so themselves."²

There are many ways bishops and quorum members can help to relieve the suffering and anxiety of the unemployed. Phil's Auto of Centerville, Utah, is a testament of what priesthood leadership and a quorum can accomplish. Phil was a member of an elders quorum and worked as a mechanic at a local automobile repair shop. Unfortunately, the repair shop where Phil worked experienced economic trouble and had to let Phil go from his job. He was devastated by this turn of events.

On hearing about Phil's job loss, his bishop, Leon Olson, and his elders quorum presidency prayerfully considered ways they could help Phil get back on his feet. After all, he was a fellow quorum member, a brother, and he needed help. They concluded that Phil had the skills to run his own business. One of the quorum members offered that he had an old barn that perhaps could be used as a repair shop. Other quorum members could help gather needed tools and supplies to

equip the new shop. Almost everyone in the quorum could at least help clean the old barn.

They shared their ideas with Phil; then they shared their plan with the members of their quorum. The barn was cleaned and renovated, the tools gathered, and all was put in order. Phil's Auto was a success and eventually moved to better and more permanent quarters—all because his quorum brothers offered help in a time of crisis. Priesthood quorums can and must make a difference.

Utilizing Church resources

Many wards and stakes have called employment specialists to provide bishops and quorum leaders with additional support. Do not hesitate to call upon them for help.

In many areas of the Church, we have established employment resource centers. The staff in these centers have been trained to assist you with your quorum, ward, and stake employment needs. Their close relationships with employers will be an asset with career development and employment.

The Church's Deseret Industries thrift stores offer employment and education opportunities to people of all backgrounds. Those with special needs are given the opportunity for rehabilitation, training, and job placement. Where available, Deseret Industries can be a valuable resource.

Bishops, the sisters have a role in this effort. Because of the economy, many mothers are finding it necessary to make budget and other living adjustments. Some are even finding it necessary to leave the home to find work. The Relief Society sisters, with their specially endowed, compassionate hearts, can help. They can help identify the needy. They can teach. They can babysit, console, comfort, and encourage. They can make a difference.

Now, let me say a few words to those of you who are currently unemployed. The

responsibility for finding employment or improving your employment rests with you. Continued guidance comes from the Lord through regular fasting and prayer. Your quorum leaders, bishops, specialists, and employment resource center staff will help in your efforts. We fear, however, that often priesthood leaders are unaware of your situation. *Speak up!* Let them know you are looking for work. And bishops and priesthood leaders, *rise up* and let the brotherhood of the priesthood engage themselves in the wonderful opportunity to truly be a quorum, a brotherhood, a brother's keeper.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, while a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said:

"I am satisfied, my brethren, that there is enough of expertise, of knowledge, of strength, of concern in every priesthood quorum to assist the troubled members of that quorum if these resources are properly administered.

"... It is the obligation of the priesthood quorum to set in motion those forces and facilities which will equip the needy member to provide on a continuing basis for himself and his family."³

"Go and bring in those people"

In October 1856, during a general conference, President Young learned that two handcart companies, the Martin company and the Willie company, were traveling late in the season and would face harsh winter weather on the plains of the western United States. He stood at the pulpit as a prophet of God and declared:

"Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with hand-carts, . . . and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. . . . This community is to send for them and bring them in. . . .

"That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess, it is to save the people. . . .

"I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the celestial kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. Go and bring in those people now on the plains."⁴

As a result of President Young's call to action, wagons with teams of mules, men to drive them, and flour and other supplies were immediately sent to rescue the people stranded on the plains.

Brethren, this is your phone call. This is our phone call. May the Lord bless us all with the same sense of urgency to answer the call today to bring in our people from these economic challenges as He did in the case of the handcart companies is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Robert D. Hales, "A Gospel Vision of Welfare: Faith in Action," in *Basic Principles of Welfare and Self-Reliance* (booklet, 2009), 1.
2. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 65; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 50.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Welfare Responsibilities of the Priesthood Quorums," *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 85–86.
4. Brigham Young, *Deseret News*, Oct. 15, 1856, 252.

Elder Claudio R. M. Costa

Elder Andersen, in behalf of the Seventies, I would like to say to you that we love you and we sustain you with our hearts and faith.

Priesthood responsibilities

My dear brethren, it is a sacred privilege to be part of the royal army of the Lord.¹ I

am humbled as I stand before you, imagining you assembled in locations throughout the world.

In the worldwide leadership training meeting held on June 21, 2003, President Gordon B. Hinckley taught us that as priesthood holders we have a fourfold responsibility. He said: “Each of us has a fourfold responsibility. First, we have a responsibility to our families. Second, we have a responsibility to our employers. Third, we have a responsibility to the Lord’s work. Fourth, we have a responsibility to ourselves.”²

The four areas of responsibility are vitally important.

Family obligations

President Hinckley said: “It is imperative that you not neglect your families. Nothing you have is more precious.”³

It is our responsibility as fathers to lead our families in daily family prayer, daily study of the scriptures, and in family home evening. We must prioritize and preserve these opportunities to build and strengthen the spiritual underpinnings of our families. President Hinckley said: “Try not to let anything interfere. Consider it sacred.”⁴

Concerning family home evening, he said, “Keep Monday night sacred for family home evening.”⁵

Our children, just like their parents, have time demands on them in every aspect of their lives. They have activities involving church and school and friends. Many of our children are attending schools where they are the minority. Frequently the schools schedule events on Monday evenings—activities like sports, rehearsals or practices, choirs, and other events. We need to keep Monday nights free of other commitments so that we can have our family home evenings. No other activity is more important for our family.

It is during the family home evening and in other family settings that we prepare our children to receive the blessings

of the Lord. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve said: “Ours is the responsibility to ensure that we have family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. Ours is the responsibility to prepare our children to receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation.”⁶

Family home evening is a very special time for us to strengthen ourselves and each family member. It is important to include the whole family in assignments for family home evening. A child could share the Primary lesson that he or she had last Sunday. Family home evening strengthened the faith and testimony of my own family.

Daily study of the scriptures is another important family activity. I remember when my son was seven years old. He was taking a shower one night during a storm when we lost the power in our home. My wife called to him and told him to hurry to finish his shower and to then take a candle and come slowly downstairs for our family prayer. She warned him to be careful to not drop the candle on the carpet because it could start a fire and the house could burn down. Several minutes later he came down the stairs struggling to hold the candle in one hand, and with his other arm he was carrying his scriptures. His mother asked him why he was bringing his scriptures. His answer to her was, “Mom, if the house burns down, I must save my scriptures!” We knew that our efforts to help him to love the scriptures had been planted in his heart forever.

Obligations outside the home

Regarding our responsibility to our employers, President Hinckley said: “You have an obligation. Be honest with your employer. Do not do Church work on his time.”⁷

He also reminded us that our employment enables us to take care of our family as well as allowing us to be effective servants in the Church.

Priesthood holders have many responsibilities and assignments. We have opportunities to visit, interview, teach, and serve people. It is our sacred responsibility to edify Church members and to help strengthen their faith and testimony of our Savior Jesus Christ. We have opportunities to take care of the families whom we serve as home teachers and to teach members to provide for themselves, their families, and the poor and needy in the Lord's way. Priesthood holders have the responsibility to motivate the youth to prepare to serve honorable full-time missions and to be married in the temple.⁸

President Ezra Taft Benson taught, "Priesthood holders need to provide watchcare over quorum members and their families through organized home teaching."⁹

We need to be concerned about each member of the Church for whom we have responsibility. Home teaching is one of our great responsibilities.

Setting an example of service

As fathers, we also have the sacred responsibility to set a worthy example for our children to help them to become better parents and leaders in their own homes. Quoting Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve: "May we ask all priesthood leaders, especially you fathers, to help prepare your sons. Prepare them both spiritually and temporally, to look and to act as servants of the Lord."¹⁰

When we receive the priesthood, we make an eternal covenant to serve others.¹¹ As priesthood holders, we can be a powerful influence in the lives of others.

President Thomas S. Monson reminded us: "How fortunate and blessed we are to be holders of the priesthood of God. . . .

"... Always remember that people are looking to you for leadership and you are

influencing the lives of individuals either for good or for bad, which influence will be felt for generations to come."¹²

Our example will always speak loudly. During my years as a Church member, I have been influenced by the examples of many leaders and Church members. I remember a wonderful couple who were great examples to our family and to the entire ward. They were baptized in 1982. I was their bishop.

Celso and Irene lived quite far from the chapel. They walked 40 minutes each way to the church, and they never missed a meeting. They were always present with big smiles on their faces. It was their disposition to serve others. Celso and Irene have a son, Marcos, who was born mentally and physically handicapped. I remember well how they took such loving care of their son. In 1999 Celso had a cerebral brain hemorrhage that left his lower body paralyzed. Celso continued to come to church faithfully with his family. They were faithful in the payment of their tithing and paid generous fast offerings. Our son Moroni is now their bishop, and he shared with me that Celso and Irene continue to serve faithfully. Not only do they serve in their ward callings; they also serve faithfully as ordinance workers in the São Paulo Brazil Temple. They serve every Friday from early morning until night. They always contribute so willingly of their time and resources in faithfully fulfilling their Church responsibilities.

President Monson counseled: "Most service given by priesthood holders is accomplished quietly, without fanfare. A friendly smile, a warm handclasp, a sincere testimony of truth can literally lift lives, change human nature, and save precious souls."¹³

That is the kind of quiet service rendered by Celso and Irene.

Spiritual growth

As we consider the wise use of our time and resources to meet the needs of our families, our employment, and our Church callings, it is important to remember that every priesthood holder needs to grow spiritually. This is a responsibility we have to ourselves. And it is important to remember that we all have helpers.¹⁴ The counsel from our prophets, seers, and revelators is the most precious help that we receive.

Our Savior extended this invitation to each and every one of us individually:

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”¹⁵

When we do His work and His will, rather than our own will, we will realize that the yoke is easy and the burden is light. He will be with us always. He will reveal to us the exact portion that we need for success with our families, our career, and every responsibility that we have in His Church. He will help us to grow individually and as brethren in the priesthood.

I know that the Church is true. I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. I know that Thomas S. Monson is the living prophet on the earth today. I know that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See “Behold! A Royal Army,” *Hymns*, no. 251.
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 21, 2003, 22.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve,” 22.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve,” 22.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve,” 23.
6. Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 53; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 40.
7. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve,” 23.
8. See First Presidency letter, Sept. 25, 1996, “Leadership Training Emphasis.”
9. Ezra Taft Benson, “Strengthen Thy Stakes,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1991, 5.
10. M. Russell Ballard, in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 55; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 43.
11. See M. Russell Ballard, “The Greater Priesthood: Giving a Lifetime of Service in the Kingdom,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1992, 72.
12. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 65–66; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 65–66; see also N. Eldon Tanner, in Conference Report, Oct. 1975, 112; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 74.
13. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 2008, 64; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 62.
14. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve,” 23.
15. Matthew 11:29–30.

President Monson

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now sing “High on the Mountain Top.” President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then address us. He will be followed by President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The choir and congregation sang
“High on the Mountain Top.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

My dear brethren, I have known for a few months the message I want to give to you today. During that time, I have searched for a story that would illustrate what I want to say. I looked for a story about farming. I looked for a story about animals. In honor of Elder Scott, I looked for a story about nuclear engineering, and in honor of President Monson, one about raising pigeons.

In the end, one story kept coming back to me—a story that has been imprinted on my memory for many, many years. It isn't about farming, animals, nuclear engineering, or pigeons. It is—as you might have guessed—about aviation. I call it “The Story of the Lightbulb.”

The story of the lightbulb, or losing sight of what matters most

On a dark December night 36 years ago, a Lockheed 1011 jumbo jet crashed into the Florida Everglades, killing over 100 people. This terrible accident was one of the deadliest crashes in the history of the United States.

A curious thing about this accident is that all vital parts and systems of the airplane were functioning perfectly—the plane could have easily landed safely at its destination in Miami, only 20 miles away.

During the final approach, however, the crew noticed that one green light had failed to illuminate—a light that indicates whether or not the nose landing gear has extended successfully. The pilots discontinued the approach, set the aircraft into a circling holding pattern over the pitch-black Everglades, and turned their attention toward investigating the problem.

They became so preoccupied with their search that they failed to realize the plane was gradually descending closer and closer toward the dark swamp below. By the time

someone noticed what was happening, it was too late to avoid the disaster.

After the accident, investigators tried to determine the cause. The landing gear had indeed lowered properly. The plane was in perfect mechanical condition. Everything was working properly—all except one thing: a single burned-out lightbulb. That tiny bulb—worth about 20 cents—started the chain of events that ultimately led to the tragic death of over 100 people.

Of course, the malfunctioning lightbulb didn't cause the accident; it happened because the crew placed its focus on something that seemed to matter at the moment while losing sight of what mattered most.

Set your heart on things that matter most

The tendency to focus on the insignificant at the expense of the profound happens not only to pilots but to everyone. We are all at risk. The driver who focuses on the road has a far greater chance of arriving at his destination accident free than the driver who focuses on sending text messages on his phone.

We know what matters most in life—the Light of Christ teaches this to everyone. We as faithful Latter-day Saints have the Holy Ghost as a “constant companion”¹ to teach us the things of eternal value. I imagine that any priesthood holder listening to my voice today, if asked to prepare a talk on the subject “what matters most,” could and would do an excellent job. Our weakness is in failing to align our actions with our conscience.

Pause for a moment and check where your own heart and thoughts are. Are you focused on the things that matter most? How you spend your quiet time may provide a valuable clue. Where do your thoughts go when the pressure of deadlines is gone? Are your thoughts and

heart focused on those short-lived, fleeting things that matter only in the moment or on things that matter most?

What grudges do you bear? What excuses do you cling to that keep you from being the kind of husband, father, son, and priesthood holder you know you should be? What are the things that distract you from your duties or hinder you from magnifying your calling more diligently?

Avoid becoming distracted

Sometimes the things that distract us are not bad in and of themselves; often they even make us feel good.

It is possible to take even good things to excess. One example can be seen in a father or grandfather who spends hours upon hours searching for his ancestors or creating a blog while neglecting or avoiding quality or meaningful time with his own children and grandchildren. Another example could be a gardener who spends his days pulling weeds from the soil while ignoring the spiritual weeds that threaten to choke his soul.

Even some programs of the Church can become a distraction if we take them to extremes and allow them to dominate our time and our attention at the expense of things that matter most. We need balance in life.

When we truly love our Heavenly Father and His children, we demonstrate that love through our actions. We forgive one another and seek to do good, for “our old [self] is crucified with [Christ].”² We “visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,” and we keep ourselves “unspotted from the vices of the world.”³

My dear brethren of the priesthood, we live in the latter days. The gospel of Jesus Christ is restored to the earth. The keys of the priesthood of God are given again to man. We live in an era of anticipation and preparation, entrusted by God to prepare ourselves, our families, our world for the approaching dawn—the day when the Son

of God will “descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God”⁴ and usher in His millennial reign.

We have been entrusted with the holy priesthood and charged with the responsibility, power, and right to act as agents of our Heavenly King.

These are the things that matter most. These are the things of eternal value that deserve our attention.

We cannot and we must not allow ourselves to get distracted from our sacred duty. We cannot and we must not lose focus on the things that matter most.

Nehemiah

Nehemiah of the Old Testament is a great example of staying focused and committed to an important task. Nehemiah was an Israelite who lived in exile in Babylon and served as cupbearer to the king. One day the king asked Nehemiah why he seemed so sad. Nehemiah replied, “Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ [graves], lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?”⁵

When the king heard this, his heart was softened, and he gave Nehemiah the authority to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. However, not everyone was happy with this plan. In fact, several rulers who lived near Jerusalem grieved exceedingly “that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.”⁶ These men “took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.”⁷

Fearless, Nehemiah did not allow the opposition to distract him. Instead, he organized his resources and manpower and moved forward rebuilding the city, “for the people had a mind to work.”⁸

But as the walls of the city began to rise, opposition intensified. Nehemiah’s enemies threatened, conspired, and ridiculed. Their threats were very real, and they grew so intimidating that Nehemiah

confessed, "They all made us afraid."⁹ In spite of the danger and the ever-present threat of invasion, the work progressed. It was a time of stress, for every builder "had his sword girded by his side, and so builded."¹⁰

As the work continued, Nehemiah's enemies became more desperate. Four times they entreated him to leave the safety of the city and meet with them under the pretense of resolving the conflict, but Nehemiah knew that their intent was to do him harm. Each time they approached him, he responded with the same answer: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."¹¹

What a remarkable response! With that clear and unchanging purpose of heart and mind, with that great resolve, the walls of Jerusalem rose until they were rebuilt in an astonishing 52 days.¹²

Nehemiah refused to allow distractions to prevent him from doing what the Lord wanted him to do.

We will not come down

I am encouraged and inspired by the many faithful priesthood holders today who are of similar heart and mind. Like Nehemiah, you love the Lord and seek to magnify the priesthood you bear. The Lord loves you and is mindful of the purity of your hearts and the steadfastness of your resolve. He blesses you for your fidelity, guides your path, and uses your gifts and talents in building His kingdom on this earth.

Nevertheless, not all are like Nehemiah. There is room for improvement.

I wonder, my dear brethren of the priesthood, what could be accomplished if we all, like the people of Nehemiah, "had a mind to work." I wonder what could be accomplished if we "put away childish things"¹³ and gave ourselves, heart and soul, to becoming worthy priesthood bearers and true representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think for a moment what could be accomplished in our personal lives, in our professional lives, in our families, in our wards and branches. Think of how the kingdom of God would progress throughout the earth. Imagine how the world itself could be transformed for good if every man who bears the priesthood of God were to gird up his loins and live up to his true potential, converted in the depth of his soul, a true and faithful priesthood man, committed to building the kingdom of God.

It is easy to become distracted—to become focused on one burned-out light-bulb or the impolite acts of unkind people, whatever their motive may be. But think of the power we would have as individuals and as a body of the priesthood if, in response to every temptation to lose focus or lower our standards—the standards of God—we responded, "I am doing a great work and cannot come down."

We live in times of great challenges and great opportunities. The Lord is seeking men like Nehemiah—faithful brethren who fulfill the oath and covenant of the priesthood. He seeks to enlist unfaltering souls who diligently go about the work of building the kingdom of God—those who, when faced with opposition and temptation, say in their hearts, "I am doing a great work and cannot come down."

When faced with trial and suffering, they respond, "I am doing a great work and cannot come down."

When faced with ridicule and reproach, they proclaim, "I am doing a great work and cannot come down."

Our Heavenly Father seeks those who refuse to allow the trivial to hinder them in their pursuit of the eternal. He seeks those who will not allow the attraction of ease or the traps of the adversary to distract them from the work He has given them to perform. He seeks those whose actions conform to their words—those who say with conviction, "I am doing a great work and cannot come down."

A great work to do

I bear solemn testimony that God lives and is mindful of each one of us. He will stretch forth His hand and uphold those who rise up and bear the priesthood with honor, for in these latter days He has a great work for us to do.

This gospel does not come from man. The doctrine of the Church is not someone's best guess as to the meaning of ancient scripture. It is the truth of heaven revealed by God Himself. I testify that Joseph Smith saw what he said he saw. He truly looked into the heavens and communed with God the Father and the Son and with angels.

I bear witness that Heavenly Father speaks to those who seek Him in spirit and in truth. I have witnessed with my own eyes and joyfully testify that in our day, God speaks through His prophet, seer, and revelator, even Thomas S. Monson.

My dear brethren, like Nehemiah, we have a great work to do. We stand overlooking the horizon of our age. It is my fervent prayer that in spite of temptations, we will

never lower our standards; that in spite of distractions, wherever they may come from, we will not lose focus on what matters most; that we will stand resolute and together, shoulder to shoulder, as we valiantly bear the banner of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray that we may be worthy of the holy priesthood of Almighty God and, to a man, lift our heads and with unwavering voice proclaim to the world, "We are doing a great work, and we will not come down." In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:46.
2. Romans 6:6.
3. Joseph Smith Translation, James 1:27.
4. 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
5. Nehemiah 2:3.
6. Nehemiah 2:10.
7. Nehemiah 4:1.
8. Nehemiah 4:6.
9. Nehemiah 6:9.
10. Nehemiah 4:18.
11. Nehemiah 6:3.
12. See Nehemiah 6:15.
13. 1 Corinthians 13:11.

President Henry B. Eyring

"Man down!"

I am grateful for the honor and the blessing of speaking to the priesthood of God. My purpose tonight is to help you to be brave and bold in your priesthood service.

You will need bravery and you will need boldness because you are enlisted in the Lord's army in the last dispensation. This is not a time of peace. That has been so since Satan arrayed his forces against our Heavenly Father's plan in the premortal existence. We don't know the details of the combat then. But we know one result. Satan and his followers were cast down into the earth. And since the creation of Adam and Eve, the conflict has continued.

We have seen it intensify. And the scriptures suggest that the war will become more violent and the spiritual casualties on the Lord's side will mount.

Almost all of us have seen a battlefield portrayed in a film or read the description in a story. Over the din of explosions and the shouts of soldiers, there comes a cry, "Man down!"

When that cry sounds, faithful fellow soldiers will move toward the sound. Another soldier or a medic will ignore danger and move to the injured comrade. And the man down will know that help will come. Whatever the risk, someone will run low or crawl to get there in time to protect and give aid. That is true in every

band of men joined in a difficult and dangerous mission which they are determined to fulfill at any sacrifice. The histories of such groups are full of stories of those loyal men who were determined that no man would be left behind.

Here is one instance from an official account.¹ During fighting in Somalia in October of 1993, two United States Army Rangers in a helicopter during the fire-fight learned that two other helicopters near them had fallen to the earth. The two rangers, in their relative safety aloft, learned by radio that no ground forces were available to rescue one of the downed aircrews. Growing numbers of the enemy were closing in on the crash site.

The two men watching from above volunteered to go down to the ground (the words they used on the radio were to “be inserted”) to protect their critically wounded comrades. Their request was denied because the situation was so dangerous. They asked a second time. Permission was again denied. Only after their third request were they put down on the ground.

Armed only with their personal weapons, they fought their way to the crashed helicopter and the injured fliers. They moved through intense small arms fire as enemies converged on the crash site. They pulled the wounded from the wreckage. They put themselves in a perimeter around the wounded, placing themselves in the most dangerous positions. They protected their comrades until their ammunition was depleted and they were fatally wounded. Their bravery and their sacrifice saved the life of a pilot who would have been lost.

They were each awarded posthumously the Medal of Honor, their nation’s highest recognition for bravery in the face of an armed enemy. The citation reads that what they did was “above and beyond the call of duty.”

But I wonder if they saw it that way as they moved to the downed airmen. Out of loyalty they felt a duty to stand by their

fellow soldiers, whatever the cost. The courage to act and their selfless service came from feeling that they were responsible for the lives, the happiness, and the safety of comrades.

Care for the spiritually wounded

Such a feeling of responsibility for others is at the heart of faithful priesthood service. Our comrades are being wounded in the spiritual conflict around us. So are the people we are called to serve and protect from harm. Spiritual wounds are not easily visible, except with inspired eyes. But bishops, branch presidents, and mission presidents sitting before fellow disciples of the Savior can see the wounded and the wounds.

It has happened for years and across the earth. I remember as a bishop looking out at the face and the posture of a young man of the priesthood and having the thought come to my mind so clearly that it seemed audible: “I need to see him—and soon. Something is happening. He needs help.”

I would never put off such an impression, because I had learned that the wounds of sin are often not felt at first by the one being hurt. Satan seems sometimes to inject something to deaden the spiritual pain while inflicting the wound. Unless something happens soon to begin repentance, the wound can worsen and widen.

Consequently, as a priesthood holder responsible for the spiritual survival of some of Heavenly Father’s children, you will then move to help without waiting for a cry, “Man down!” Even a best friend or other leaders or parents may not see what you have seen.

You may have been the only one to sense by inspiration the warning cry. The others may feel, as you will be tempted to think, “Maybe the trouble I thought I saw is just my imagination. What right do I have to judge another? It’s not my responsibility. I’ll leave it alone until he asks for help.”

Only an authorized judge in Israel is given the power and the responsibility to verify that there is a serious wound, to explore it, and then, under inspiration from God, to prescribe the necessary treatment for healing to begin. Yet you are under covenant to go to a spiritually wounded child of God. You are responsible to be brave enough and bold enough not to turn away.

I need to explain, as best I can, at least two things. First, why do you have a responsibility to move to help your wounded friend? And, second, how do you meet that responsibility?

The responsibility to help others

First, you are under covenant, as has been made clear to you, that when you accepted the trust from God to receive the priesthood, you accepted a responsibility for whatever you might do or fail to do for the salvation of others, however difficult and dangerous that might appear to be for you.

There are countless examples of priesthood holders who shouldered that grave responsibility as you and I must. This is how Jacob in the Book of Mormon described his sacred trust when he moved in difficult circumstances to give aid: “Now, my beloved brethren, I, Jacob, according to the responsibility which I am under to God, to magnify mine office with soberness, and that I might rid my garments of your sins, I come up into the temple this day that I might declare unto you the word of God.”²

Now, you might object that Jacob was a prophet and you are not. But your office, whatever it is in the priesthood, brings with it an obligation to “lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees”³ of those around you. You are the Lord’s servant covenanted to do for others, as best you can, what He would do.

Your great opportunity and your responsibility are described in Ecclesiastes:

“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

“For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.”⁴

From that, you will understand the true and sobering words from Joseph Smith: “None but fools will trifle with the souls of men.”⁵ As Jacob believed, the woe of any fallen man or woman he could have helped and did not would become his own sorrow. Your happiness and that of those you are called to serve as a priesthood holder are bound together.

How best to help others

Now we come to the question of how best to help those you are called to serve and rescue. That will depend on your capacities and on the nature of your priesthood relationship to the person who is in spiritual peril. Let me give three cases which may be your opportunity at times in your priesthood service.

Serving as a young home teacher

Let’s start when you are an inexperienced junior companion, a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood assigned with a seasoned companion to visit a young family. Before preparing for the visit, you will pray for strength and inspiration to see their needs and know what help you could give. If you can, you will have that prayer with your companion, naming those you will visit. As you pray, your heart will be drawn out to them personally and to God. You and your companion will agree on what you hope to accomplish. You will work out a plan for what you will do.

Whatever the plan, you will watch and listen with great intensity and humility during the visit. You are young and inexperienced. But the Lord knows their spiritual state and their needs perfectly. He loves them. And because you know He sends you to act for Him, you can

have faith that you can sense their needs and what you can do to meet your charge to help. It will come as you visit face-to-face in their home. That is why you have this priesthood charge in the Doctrine and Covenants: "Visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties."⁶

And then you have an added charge which takes even greater discernment:

"The teacher's duty is to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them;

"And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

"And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty."⁷

You and your companion will rarely receive inspiration to know the details of the degree to which they are meeting that standard. But I can promise you from experience that you will be given the gift to know what is well with them. And from that you will be able to encourage them. There is another promise I can make: you and your companion will be inspired to know what changes they could make to begin the spiritual healing they need. The words of what you are charged to have happen in their lives will almost certainly contain some of the most important changes the Lord would have them make.

If your companion feels an impression to urge change, watch what he does. You will likely be surprised at the way the Spirit guides him to speak. There will be the sound of love in his voice. He will find a way to tie the needed change with a blessing that will follow. If it is the father or mother who needs to make a change, he may show how it would lead to happiness for the children. He will describe the change as a move away from unhappiness to a better and safer place.

Your contribution during the visit may seem to you small, but it can be more

powerful than you may think possible. You will show by your face and manner that you care for the people. They will see that your love for them and the Lord makes you unafraid. And you will be bold enough to bear your testimony to truth. Your humble, simple, and perhaps brief testimony may touch the heart of a person more easily than that of your more experienced companion. I have seen it happen.

Whatever part you play in that priesthood visit, your desire to go to the people for the Lord to help them will bring at least two blessings. First, you will feel the love of God for the people you visit. And, second, you will feel the Savior's gratitude for your desire to give the help the Savior knew they needed.

He sent you to them because He trusted that you would go feeling responsible to urge them toward Him and toward happiness.

Serving fellow quorum members

As you grow a little older, there is another opportunity which will come to you in priesthood service. You will come to know your fellow quorum members well. You may have played basketball or football or shared some youth activities and service projects. With some you will have become close friends.

You will have come to recognize when they are happy and when they are sad. Neither of you may be in a position of authority in the quorum. But you will feel responsible for your fellow member in the priesthood. He may confide in you that he is beginning to break a commandment which you know will do him spiritual harm. He may ask for advice because he trusts you.

I can tell you from experience that if you succeed in influencing him away from a dangerous path, you will never forget the joy which came from being his true friend. If you do not succeed, I promise that when his grief and sadness come, as they will,

you will feel his pain as if it were your own. Yet if you tried to help, you will still be his friend. And, in fact, for years he may talk with you about what good things there might have been and how grateful he is that you cared enough to try. You will comfort him then and invite him again, as you did in your youth, to come back to the happiness which the Atonement still makes possible for him.

Serving as a father

Now, later in your life you will be a father—a priesthood father. What you have learned in your priesthood service as you helped others away from sadness and toward happiness will give you the power you will need and want. Years of being responsible for the souls of men will prepare you for helping and protecting your family, whom you will love more than you can imagine in your youth. You will know how to lead them with priesthood power to safety.

My prayer is that you will have joy in your priesthood service throughout your life and forever. I pray that you will develop the bravery and love for Heavenly Father's children that led the sons of Mosiah to plead for the chance to face death and danger to take the gospel to a hardened people. Their desire and their bravery came from feeling responsible for the eternal happiness of strangers in danger of eternal misery.⁸

May we have a part of the desire which Jehovah had, in the world before this one, when He asked to come down from the realms of glory to serve us and give His life for us. He asked His Father, "Send me."⁹

I testify that you were called of God and you are sent to serve His children. He

wants that no one be left behind. President Monson holds the keys of the priesthood in all the earth. God will give you inspiration and strength to meet your charge to help His children find their way to the happiness made possible by the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I so testify to you in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See *The U.S. Army Leadership Field Manual* (2004), 28–29.
2. Jacob 2:2.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
4. Ecclesiastes 4:9–10.
5. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 3:295.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 20:47.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53–55.
8. See Mosiah 28:1–8.
9. See Abraham 3:27.

President Monson

My dear brethren, this has been a memorable priesthood meeting. Jot down what you've heard this evening. It will help you to better honor the priesthood you hold.

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to the priesthood choir from Brigham Young University–Idaho for the beautiful music they have provided and also thank the brethren who have addressed us this evening.

It will now be my pleasure to speak to you. Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Shirley D. Christensen of the Seventy.

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren of the priesthood assembled here in this full Conference Center and in locations throughout the world, I am humbled by the responsibility which is mine to address you. I endorse those messages which have already been presented and express to each of you my sincere love, as well as my appreciation for your faith and your devotion.

Bearing the priesthood worthily

Brethren, our responsibilities as bearers of the priesthood are most significant, as outlined in the Doctrine and Covenants: “The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church.”¹ And further, “The power and authority of the lesser, or Aaronic Priesthood, is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels, and to administer in outward ordinances, the letter of the gospel, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, agreeable to the covenants and commandments.”²

In 1958 Elder Harold B. Lee, who later served as the 11th President of the Church, described the priesthood as “the Lord’s . . . troops against the forces of evil.”³

President John Taylor stated that “the power manifested by the priesthood is simply the power of God.”⁴

These stirring declarations from prophets of God help us to understand that each man and each boy who holds the priesthood of God must be worthy of that great privilege and responsibility. Each must strive to learn his duty and then to do it to the best of his ability. As we do so, we provide the means by which our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, can accomplish Their work here upon the earth. It is we who are Their representatives here.

In the world today we face difficulties and challenges, some of which can

seem truly daunting. However, with God on our side we cannot fail. As we bear His holy priesthood worthily, we will be victorious.

Be your best self

Now to you who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, may I say that I sincerely hope each of you is aware of the significance of your priesthood ordination. Yours is a vital role in the life of every member of your ward as you participate in the administration and passing of the sacrament each Sunday.

I had the privilege to serve as the secretary of my deacons quorum. I recall the many assignments we members of that quorum had the opportunity to fill. Passing the sacred sacrament, collecting the monthly fast offerings, and looking after one another come readily to mind. The most frightening one, however, happened at the leadership session of our ward conference. The member of our stake presidency who was presiding called on a number of the ward officers to speak. They did so. Then, without the slightest warning, he stood and said, “We will now call on one of our younger ward officers, Thomas S. Monson, secretary of the deacons quorum, to give us an accounting of his service and to bear his testimony.” I don’t remember a single thing I said, but I have never forgotten the experience or the lesson that it taught me. It was the Apostle Peter who said, “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.”⁵

In an earlier generation, the Lord gave this promise to holders of the priesthood: “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.”⁶

This is not a time for fear, brethren, but rather a time for faith—a time for each of us who holds the priesthood to be his best self.

Although our journey through mortality will at times place us in harm's way, may I offer you tonight three suggestions which, when observed and followed, will lead us to safety. They are:

1. Study diligently.
2. Pray fervently.
3. Live righteously.

These suggestions are not new; they have been taught and repeated again and again. If we incorporate them into our lives, however, we will have the strength to withstand the adversary. Should we ignore them, we will be opening the door for Satan to have influence and power over us.

Study diligently

First, study diligently. Every holder of the priesthood should participate in daily scripture study. Crash courses are not nearly so effective as the day-to-day reading and application of the scriptures in our lives. Become acquainted with the lessons the scriptures teach. Learn the background and setting of the Master's parables and the prophets' admonitions. Study them as though they were speaking to you, for such is the truth.

The prophet Lehi and his son Nephi were each shown in vision the importance of obtaining and then holding fast to the word of God. Concerning the rod of iron shown him, Nephi said this to his disbelieving brothers, Laman and Lemuel:

"And I said unto them that [the rod] was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction.

"Wherefore, I, Nephi, did exhort them to give heed unto the word of the Lord;

yea, I did exhort them with all the energies of my soul, and with all the faculty which I possessed, that they would give heed to the word of God and remember to keep his commandments always in all things."⁷

I promise you, whether you hold the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood, that if you will study the scriptures diligently, your power to avoid temptation and to receive direction of the Holy Ghost in all you do will be increased.

Pray fervently

Second, pray fervently. With God, all things are possible. Men of the Aaronic Priesthood, men of the Melchizedek Priesthood, remember the prayer of the Prophet Joseph, offered in that grove called sacred. Look around you and see the result of that answered prayer.

Adam prayed; Jesus prayed. We know the outcome of their prayers. He who notes the fall of a sparrow surely hears the pleadings of our hearts. Remember the promise: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."⁸

To those within the sound of my voice who are struggling with challenges and difficulties large and small, prayer is the provider of spiritual strength; it is the passport to peace. Prayer is the means by which we approach our Father in Heaven, who loves us. Speak to Him in prayer and then listen for the answer. Miracles are wrought through prayer.

Sister Daisy Ogando lives in New York City, home to more than eight million people. Some years ago Sister Ogando met with the missionaries and was taught the gospel. Gradually, she and the missionaries lost contact. Time passed. Then, in 2007, the principles of the gospel she had been taught by the missionaries stirred within her heart.

One day while getting into a taxi, Daisy saw the missionaries at a distance, but she was unable to make contact with them

before they disappeared from view. She prayed fervently to our Heavenly Father and promised Him that if He would somehow direct the missionaries to her once again, she would open her door to them. She returned home that day with faith in her heart that God would hear and answer her prayer.

In the meantime, two young missionaries who had been sincerely praying and working to find people to teach were one day examining the tracting records of missionaries who had previously served in their area. As they did so, they came across the name of Daisy Ogando. When they approached her apartment the very afternoon that Sister Ogando offered that simple but fervent prayer, she opened the door and said those words that are music to every missionary who has ever heard them: "Elders, come in. I've been waiting for you!"

Two fervent prayers were answered, contact was reestablished, missionary lessons were taught, and arrangements were made for Daisy and her son Eddy to be baptized.

Remember to pray fervently.

Live righteously

My final suggestion, my brethren: live righteously. Isaiah, that great prophet of the Old Testament, gave this stirring charge to holders of the priesthood: "Touch no unclean thing; . . . be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord."⁹ That's about as straight as it could be given.

Holders of the priesthood may not necessarily be eloquent in their speech. They may not hold advanced degrees in difficult fields of study. They may very well be men of humble means. But God is no respecter of persons, and He will sustain His servants in righteousness as they avoid the evils of our day and live lives of virtue and purity. May I illustrate.

Some 900 miles north of Salt Lake City is the beautiful city of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, home of the famous Calgary

Stampede, one of Canada's largest annual events and the world's largest outdoor rodeo. The 10-day event features a rodeo competition, exhibits, agricultural competitions, and chuck wagon races. The Stampede Parade, which occurs on opening day, is one of the festival's oldest and largest traditions. The parade follows a nearly three-mile route in downtown Calgary, with attendance reaching 350,000 spectators, many dressed in western attire.

Several years ago, a marching band from a large high school in Utah had auditioned for and had received one of the coveted entries to march in the Calgary Stampede Parade. Months of fund-raising, early-morning practices up and down the streets, and other preparations were undertaken in order for the band to travel to Calgary and participate in the parade, where one band would be selected to receive the first-place honor.

Finally the day for departure arrived, with the eager students and their leaders boarding the buses and heading north for the long journey to Calgary.

While en route, the caravan stopped in Cardston, Alberta, Canada, where the group remained for an overnight stay. The local Relief Society sisters there prepared sack lunches for the band members to enjoy before departing again. Brad, one of the band members, who was a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood, was not hungry and decided to keep his lunch until later.

Brad liked to sit in the back of the bus. As he took his usual seat there in preparation for the remainder of the journey to Calgary, he tossed his sack lunch on the shelf behind the last row of seats. There the lunch sat by the rear window as the July afternoon sun shone through. Unfortunately, the sack lunch contained an egg salad sandwich. For those of you who don't understand the significance of this, may I just say that egg salad must be refrigerated. If it is not, and if it is subjected to high heat such as that which would be produced by the sun beating through a bus window on a sunny day, it becomes a rather efficient

incubator for various strains of bacteria that can result in what may commonly be referred to as food poisoning.

Sometime before arriving in Calgary, Brad grew hungry. Remembering the sack lunch, he gulped down the egg salad sandwich. As the buses arrived in Calgary and drove around the city, the members of the band grew excited—all except for Brad. Unfortunately, all that grew within him were severe stomach pains and other discomforts associated with food poisoning. You know what they are.

Upon arriving at their destination, the band members exited the bus. Brad, however, did not. Although he knew his fellow band members were counting on him to play his drum in the parade the following morning, Brad was doubled over in pain and was too sick to leave the bus. Providentially for him, two of his friends, Steve and Mike, who had recently graduated from high school and who had also recently been ordained to the office of elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood, found that Brad was missing and decided to look for him.

Finding Brad in the rear of the bus and learning what the problem was, Steve and Mike felt helpless. Finally it occurred to them that they were elders and held the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood to bless the sick. Despite their total lack of experience in giving a priesthood blessing, these two new elders had faith in the power they held. They laid their hands on Brad's head and, invoking the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood, in the name of Jesus Christ uttered the simple words to bless Brad to be made well.

From that moment, Brad's symptoms were completely gone. The next morning he took his place with the rest of the band members and proudly marched down the streets of Calgary. The band received first-place honors and the coveted blue ribbon. Far more important, however, was that two young, inexperienced but worthy

priesthood holders had answered the call to represent the Lord in serving their fellowman. When it was necessary for them to exercise their priesthood in behalf of one who was desperately in need of their help, they were able to respond because they lived their lives righteously.

Strength to meet challenges

Brethren, are we prepared for our journey through life? The pathway can at times be difficult. Chart your course, be cautious, and determine to study diligently, pray fervently, and live righteously.

Let us never despair, for the work in which we are engaged is the work of the Lord. It has been said, "The Lord shapes the back to bear the burden placed upon it."

The strength which we earnestly seek in order to meet the challenges of a complex and changing world can be ours when, with fortitude and resolute courage, we stand and declare with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."¹⁰ To this divine truth I testify and do so in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 107:18.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 107:20.
3. Harold B. Lee, "Priesthood" (address to seminary and institute personnel, Brigham Young University, July 17, 1958), 1.
4. John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom*, sel. G. Homer Durham (1943), 130.
5. 1 Peter 3:15.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
7. 1 Nephi 15:24–25.
8. James 1:5.
9. Isaiah 52:11.
10. Joshua 24:15.

The choir sang "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go."

Elder Shirley D. Christensen offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 179th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 on Sunday, April 5, 2009. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music. Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott were the organists. The choir sang “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” to begin the session. President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you this morning to the fourth general session of the 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” and will now favor us with “Sweet Hour of Prayer.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Daryl H. Garn of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Sweet Hour of Prayer.”

Elder Daryl H. Garn offered the invocation.

The choir sang “You Can Make the Pathway Bright.”

President Monson

The choir has sung “You Can Make the Pathway Bright.”

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. He will be followed by Elder Neil L. Andersen, who was sustained yesterday as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elder Steven E. Snow of the Presidency of the Seventy.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Today is the day the Christian world traditionally calls Palm Sunday. You will remember that it was on that Sunday nearly 2,000 years ago that Jesus Christ entered the city of Jerusalem during the final week of His mortal life.¹ In fulfillment of Zechariah’s ancient prophecy,² He rode in on a donkey, and as He did so, a great multitude came out to greet the Master and carpeted the path before Him with palm leaves, flowering branches, and even their own garments. As He approached, they cried, “Blessed be the King that cometh in the

name of the Lord”³ and “Hosanna to the Son of David.”⁴

Perhaps the disciples thought this was a turning point—the moment when the Jewish world would finally recognize Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. But the Savior understood that many of the shouts of praise and acclamation would be temporary. He knew that soon He would ascend to the Mount of Olives and there, alone in Gethsemane, take upon Himself the sins of the world.

The gospel of Jesus Christ

It is fitting that during the week from Palm Sunday to Easter morning we turn our thoughts to Jesus Christ, the source of light, life, and love. The multitudes in Jerusalem may have seen Him as a great king who would give them freedom from political oppression. But in reality He gave much more than that. He gave us His gospel, a pearl beyond price, the grand key of knowledge that, once understood and applied, unlocks a life of happiness, peace, and fulfillment.

The gospel is the good news of Christ. It is the revelation that the Son of God came to earth, lived a perfect life, atoned for our sins, and conquered death. It is the path of salvation, the way of hope and joy, and the assurance that God has a plan of redemption and happiness for His children.

The gospel is the way of discipleship. As we walk in that way, we can experience confidence and joy—even during times of peril, sorrow, and uncertainty.

The way of the world

We live in a time when many worry about their livelihood. They are concerned about the future and doubt their ability to resolve the challenges that confront them. Many have experienced personal misfortune and sadness. They hunger for meaning and purpose in life.

Because there is such great interest in these issues, the world is not bashful in offering numerous new answers to every problem we face. People run from one new idea to the next, hoping to find something that will answer the burning questions of their souls. They attend seminars and buy books, CDs, and other products. They get caught up in the excitement of looking for something new. But inevitably, the flame of each new theory fades, only to be replaced by another “new and improved” solution

that promises to do what the others before could not.

It’s not that these worldly options don’t contain elements of truth—many of them do. Nevertheless, they all fall short of the lasting change we seek in our lives. After the excitement wears off, the hollowness remains as we look for the next new idea to unlock the secrets of happiness.

In contrast, the gospel of Jesus Christ has the answers to all of our problems. The gospel is not a secret. It is not complicated or hidden. It can unlock the door to true happiness. It is not someone’s theory or proposition. It does not come from man at all. It springs from the pure and everlasting waters of the Creator of the universe, who knows truths we cannot even begin to comprehend. And with that knowledge, He has given us the gospel—a divine gift, the ultimate formula for happiness and success.

How do we become disciples of Jesus Christ?

When we hear the transcendent truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ, hope and faith begin to blossom inside of us.⁵ The more we fill our hearts and minds with the message of the risen Christ, the greater our desire is to follow Him and live His teachings. This, in turn, causes our faith to grow and allows the Light of Christ to illuminate our hearts. As it does, we recognize the imperfections in our lives, and we desire to be cleansed of the depressing burdens of sin. We yearn for freedom from guilt, and this inspires us to repent.

Faith and repentance lead to the purifying waters of baptism, where we covenant to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and walk in His footsteps.

To uphold us in the desire to lead a purified and holy life, we are endowed with the baptism of fire—the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, a heavenly Comforter who accompanies and guides us as we walk in the path of righteousness.

The more we are filled with the Spirit of God, the more we extend ourselves to others. We become peacemakers in our homes and families, we help our fellowmen everywhere, and we reach out in merciful acts of kindness, forgiveness, grace, and long-suffering patience.

These are the first steps along the true way of life and fulfillment. This is the peaceable way of the follower of Jesus Christ.

The path of patience

Nevertheless, it is not a quick fix or an overnight cure.

A friend of mine recently wrote to me, confiding that he was having a difficult time keeping his testimony strong and vibrant. He asked for counsel.

I wrote back to him and lovingly suggested a few specific things he could do that would align his life more closely with the teachings of the restored gospel. To my surprise, I heard back from him only a week later. The essence of his letter was this: "I tried what you suggested. It didn't work. What else have you got?"

Brothers and sisters, we have to stay with it. We don't acquire eternal life in a sprint—this is a race of endurance. We have to apply and reapply the divine gospel principles. Day after day we need to make them part of our normal life.

Too often we approach the gospel like a farmer who places a seed in the ground in the morning and expects corn on the cob by the afternoon. When Alma compared the word of God to a seed, he explained that the seed grows into a fruit-bearing tree gradually, as a result of our "faith, and [our] diligence, and patience, and long-suffering."⁶ It's true that some blessings come right away: soon after we plant the seed in our hearts, it begins to swell and sprout and grow, and by this we know that the seed is good. From the very moment we set foot upon the pathway of disci-

ship, seen and unseen blessings from God begin to attend us.

But we cannot receive the fulness of those blessings if we "neglect the tree, and take no thought for its nourishment."⁷

Knowing that the seed is good is not enough. We must "nourish it with great care, that it may get root."⁸ Only then can we partake of the fruit that is "sweet above all that is sweet, and . . . pure above all that is pure" and "feast upon this fruit even until [we] are filled, that [we] hunger not, neither shall [we] thirst."⁹

Discipleship is a journey. We need the refining lessons of the journey to craft our character and purify our hearts. By patiently walking in the path of discipleship, we demonstrate to ourselves the measure of our faith and our willingness to accept God's will rather than ours.

It is not enough merely to speak of Jesus Christ or proclaim that we are His disciples. It is not enough to surround ourselves with symbols of our religion. Discipleship is not a spectator sport. We cannot expect to experience the blessings of faith by standing inactive on the sidelines any more than we can experience the benefits of health by sitting on a sofa watching sporting events on television and giving advice to the athletes. And yet for some, "spectator discipleship" is a preferred if not a primary way of worshipping.

Ours is not a secondhand religion. We cannot receive the blessings of the gospel merely by observing the good that others do. We need to get off the sidelines and practice what we preach.

The way is open to all

The first step on the path of discipleship begins, luckily enough, in the exact place where we stand! We do not have to prequalify to take that first step. It doesn't matter if we are rich or poor. There is no requirement to be educated, eloquent, or

intellectual. We do not have to be perfect or well-spoken or even well-mannered.

You and I can walk in the path of discipleship today. Let us be humble; let us pray to our Father in Heaven with all our heart and express our desire to draw close to Him and learn of Him.

Have faith. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened.¹⁰ Serve the Lord by serving others. Become an active participant in your ward or branch. Strengthen your family by committing to live the principles of the gospel. Be of one heart and of one mind in your marriage and in your family.

Now is the time to adjust your lives to be able to have a temple recommend and use it. Now is the time to have meaningful family home evenings, to read the word of God, and to speak to our Heavenly Father in earnest prayer. Now is the time to fill our hearts with gratitude for the Restoration of His Church, for living prophets, the Book of Mormon, and the priesthood power that blesses our lives. Now is the time to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, become His disciples, and walk in His way.

There are some who believe that because they have made mistakes, they can no longer fully partake of the blessings of the gospel. How little they understand the purposes of the Lord. One of the great blessings of living the gospel is that it refines us and helps us learn from our mistakes. We “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,”¹¹ yet the Atonement of Jesus Christ has the power to make us whole when we repent.

Our beloved friend Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin taught us this principle with clarity when he said:

“Oh, it is wonderful to know that our Heavenly Father loves us, even with all our flaws! His love is such that even should we give up on ourselves, He never will.

“We [might] see ourselves in terms of yesterday and today. Our Heavenly Father sees us in terms of forever. . . .

“The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of transformation. It takes us as men and women of the earth and refines us into men and women for the eternities.”¹²

To those who have left the path of discipleship for whatever reason, I invite you to start where you are and come to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Walk again in the way of the Lord. I testify that the Lord will bless your life, endow you with knowledge and joy beyond comprehension, and distill upon you the supernal gifts of the Spirit. It is always the right time to walk in His way. It is never too late.

To those who feel inadequate because they have not been members of the Church all their lives, to those who feel that they can never make up for the time they have lost, I testify that the Lord needs your specific abilities, talents, and skills. The Church needs you; we need you. It is always the right time to walk in His way. It is never too late.

The blessings of discipleship

Let us remember on this Palm Sunday, during this Easter season, and always that the restored gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has the power to fill any emptiness, heal any wound, and bridge any vale of sorrow. It is the way of hope, faith, and trust in the Lord. The gospel of Jesus Christ is taught in its fulness in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This Church is led by a living prophet, authorized by the Lord Jesus Christ to provide direction and guidance to help us face the challenges of our day, as serious as they may be.

I bear my solemn witness that Jesus the Christ lives. He is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. He is the promised Messiah. He lived a perfect life and atoned for our sins. He will ever be at our side. He will fight our battles. He is our hope; He is our salvation; He is the way. Of this I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Matthew 21:6–11.
2. See Zechariah 9:9.
3. Luke 19:38.
4. Matthew 21:9.
5. See Romans 10:17.
6. Alma 32:43.
7. Alma 32:38.
8. Alma 32:37.
9. Alma 32:42.
10. See Matthew 7:7.
11. Romans 3:23.
12. Joseph B. Wirthlin, in Conference Report, Oct. 2007, 29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 29–30.

Elder Neil L. Andersen

Calling to apostleship

My dear brothers and sisters across the world, my knees are weak and my emotions close to the surface. I express my love for you and profoundly thank you for your sustaining vote. In so many dimensions, I feel inadequate and humbled.

I take solace that in one qualification for the holy apostleship where there can be no latitude extended, the Lord has deeply blessed me. I do know with perfect and certain clarity through the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, the Beloved Son of God.

There is no man with more love than President Thomas S. Monson. His warmth is as the sunshine at midday. Yet, as he extended to me this sacred call, you can imagine the overwhelming soberness I felt as the eyes of the prophet of God peered deeply into the chambers of my soul. Happily, you can *also* imagine the love I felt from the Lord and from His prophet as President Monson wrapped his long and loving arms around me. I love you, President Monson.

To those who know me, if ever I have been less than I should have been in your presence, I ask for your forgiveness and patience. I so very much need your faith and prayers in my behalf.

I know that I am not what I must become. I pray that I might be willing and moldable to the Lord's tutoring and correction. I take comfort from the words of

President Monson last night in the priesthood session that the Lord will shape the back to fit the burden placed upon it.

Just after my call as a General Authority 16 years ago, in a stake conference where I accompanied President Boyd K. Packer, he said something I have not forgotten. As he addressed the congregation, he said, "I know who I am." Then after a pause, he added, "I am a nobody." He then turned to me, sitting on the stand behind him, and said, "And, Brother Andersen, you are a nobody too." Then he added these words: "If you ever forget it, the Lord will remind you of it instantly, and it won't be pleasant."

I express deep gratitude for you, the faithful members of the Church. As a young missionary in France, I felt my testimony blossom as I witnessed members giving their full devotion for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

During the past 20 years, we have lived 10 years outside of the United States on Church assignments. In lands and languages different from my own, I have seen the power of God at work in your lives. How wonderful you are—the great family of believers in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Gratitude for family and leaders

The Lord has blessed me in ways I could never repay. He allowed me to marry one of His angels here on earth.

My wife, Kathy, is my light and example, a precious daughter of God, full of purity and innocence. I would be nothing without her. For much of my life, I have been trying to become what she thought I already was.

Twenty years ago when our four children were young, our family was called to serve a mission in France. With this and other calls that followed, they found themselves moving from city to city, continent to continent during those years that plead for stability. The Lord has now richly blessed them with wonderful companions and choice children of their own. I want to thank them for their goodness and for their sacrifices in my behalf. I am also grateful for my faithful parents—my mother is here today—and for all those who have done so much for me throughout my life.

I express my deep respect and love for my Brethren of the Seventy. I love them as I love my own brother. Our bond and friendship is not just of this world but will move with us through the veil.

For 16 years the members of the First Presidency and the Twelve have been my examples and teachers. I have learned from their integrity and righteousness. In these many years, I have never observed any unbridled anger, any desire for private or material gain. Never have I seen any personal positioning for influence or power.

Rather, I have seen their loyalty and care for their wives and children. I have experienced their love and sure witness of our Heavenly Father and His Son. I have watched them untiringly seek first to build up the kingdom of God. I have seen the power of God rest upon them and magnify and sustain them. I have witnessed the fulfillment of their prophetic voice. I have seen the sick raised and nations blessed through their authority and have stood with them in moments too sacred to recount. I testify that they are the Lord's anointed.

I pray that my spirit might be like that of Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin—whose passing brought about this call—a spirit void of any desire for personal attention, willing to go anywhere and do anything the Lord's prophets would have me do, applying my full consecration in testifying of the Savior and building the kingdom of God until my final breath.

We live in days long anticipated

Our days are days long anticipated in the history of the world. The scriptures speak of things “the Lord ordained and prepared before the foundation of the world” (D&C 128:5).

The revelations tell of a great gathering that will take place (see 2 Nephi 10:7–8; 3 Nephi 16:5). Isaiah prophesied that the house of the Lord would be established in the tops of the mountains and that the voice of the Lord would go from there to the whole earth (see Isaiah 2:2–3). Daniel declared that it would be as a stone cut out of a mountain without hands (see Daniel 2:34, 44–45). Peter spoke of the restitution of all things (see Acts 3:20–21). Nephi saw that those of the Church of the Lamb would not be many in number but would be in every land and nation (see 1 Nephi 14:12, 14).

We live in these days of the Lord's “marvellous work and a wonder” (Isaiah 29:14; see 2 Nephi 25:17). We have been blessed to bring the gospel to our families and our posterity and to assist in preparing for the Second Coming of the Savior. The Lord described the purposes of the Restoration “to be a light to the world, . . . to be a standard for [us, His] people, . . . and to be a messenger before [His] face to prepare the way before [Him]” (D&C 45:9). Our responsibility is not trivial; it is not by chance that we are who we are; the keeping of our covenants in these days of destiny will be a badge of honor throughout all the eternities.

I have been privileged to see the Lord's hand at work across the world. While we honor those pioneers who walked across the plains to the Salt Lake Valley, there are far more pioneers living today. They don't push handcarts, but they are exactly the same in so many ways: They have heard the voice of the Lord through the Book of Mormon and through their personal prayers. With faith and repentance they have stepped into the waters of baptism and firmly planted their feet in the rich gospel soil. As disciples of Christ, they have been willing to sacrifice for what is right and true. And with the gift of the Holy Ghost, they are holding steady in their course toward eternal life.

Divine mission of the Church

We must remember, my dear brothers and sisters, who we are and what we have in our hands. We are not alone in our desire to do good; there are wonderful people of many faiths and beliefs.

We are not alone in praying to our Heavenly Father or in receiving answers to our prayers; our Father loves all of His children.

We are not alone in sacrificing for a greater cause; there are others who are unselfish.

Others share our faith in Christ. There are loyal and decent fathers and mothers in every land who love each other and love their children. There is much we can learn from the good people all around us.

Yet we must not shrink from what is *uniquely* and *singularly* found in The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Only *here* is the priesthood of God, restored to earth by heavenly messengers. Only *here* does the Book of Mormon stand with the Bible in revealing and declaring the full divinity and gospel of Christ. Only *here* are there prophets of God, bringing guidance from heaven and holding the keys that bind in heaven what is bound on earth.

Our knowledge of the divine mission of the Church should not bring feelings of superiority or arrogance but should take us to our knees, pleading for the Lord's help that we might be what we should be. But in humility we need not be timid in remembering the Lord's words: "This is my church, and I will establish it; and nothing shall overthrow it" (Mosiah 27:13).

Above all, we proclaim our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. All that we are—all that we will ever be—we owe to Him. While we gaze in awe at His majesty, He does not ask us to stay our distance but bids us to come unto Him. "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20).

His words echo through the centuries:

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25–26).

Brothers and sisters, He lives. He is resurrected. He guides His holy work upon the earth. His prophet is President Thomas S. Monson. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Steven E. Snow

Get on with our lives

During the very early years of her life, our niece Lachelle spent the mornings with her grandmother. The two shared a special bond from these hours together.

Lachelle soon turned five years old and was preparing to begin school. On their last morning together, Grandma Squire read her granddaughter a story and rocked her in the big rocking chair. "We have had so much fun together, Lachelle," she told

her, “and now it is time for you to go to school. I love you so much; what will I ever do without you?”

With wisdom beyond her five years, Lachelle looked up at her grandmother with big brown eyes. “Grandma,” she said, “I love you too, but it is time I got on with my life.”

That is good counsel for all of us. We too need to “get on with our lives.” Most of us do not seek or even welcome dramatic changes. But change is an essential part of life’s experiences.

Many of these changes come as we naturally make our way through our earthly journey. Our lives change as we progress from childhood through youth and on into adulthood and finally old age. Schooling, missions, marriage, employment, and retirement are all examples of milestones of change.

Too often we are reluctant to enter the next stage, begin the next challenge. Maybe we are too comfortable, fearful, or lacking in faith. Grandmother’s lap is often more comfortable than the trials of kindergarten. Our parents’ basement, with unlimited video games, may be more appealing than college, marriage, or a career.

Preparing for change

How can we then best prepare for the changes we must inevitably face as we progress through life?

First, follow the prophets. Listen to and abide by the counsel of the Brethren. Prophets often raise a voice of warning but also provide steady, pragmatic counsel to help us weather the storms of life. In the opening section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord reminds us, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38). Prophets help us confront the changes and challenges we constantly face. The popular Primary song “Follow the Prophet” reminds us of this important principle: “We can get direction all along our way, if we

heed the prophets—follow what they say” (*Children’s Songbook*, 111).

Second, keep an eternal perspective. Understand that change and challenges are part of God’s plan. By design this mortal existence is a time of testing or a time “to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:25). In order to test our use of our God-given agency, we as mortals undergo a series of changes, challenges, trials, and temptations as we proceed through life. Only then are we properly tested.

In 2 Nephi we read: “For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, . . . righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad” (2 Nephi 2:11).

Life’s challenges and changes provide opportunities for us to grow as we exercise our agency in making righteous decisions.

Third, have faith. President Gordon B. Hinckley always encouraged members of the Church to move forward with faith (see “God Hath Not Given Us the Spirit of Fear,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1984, 4). As we daily confront a world full of negativity, doubt, fear, and even dread can creep into our hearts. President Thomas S. Monson has counseled us that “faith and doubt cannot exist in the same mind at the same time, for one will dispel the other” (“Come unto Him in Prayer and Faith,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2009, 6). In Moroni we read that “without faith there cannot be any hope” (Moroni 7:42). We must exercise faith to take on life’s challenges and changes. It is how we learn and progress.

Fourth, be of good cheer. Many of our members across the globe are facing challenges, economic and otherwise. At such times it is easy to feel despondent and forgotten. During the early, difficult days of the Church, the Lord counseled the Saints to be happy: “Be of good cheer, little children; for I am in your midst, and I have not forsaken you” (D&C 61:36).

In his last conference talk, six months ago, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin taught how to respond to adversity. Part of his counsel included: “The next time you’re tempted to groan, you might try to laugh instead. It will extend your life and make the lives of all those around you more enjoyable” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2008, 25; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 27). Laughter and a good sense of humor can soften the bumps along life’s journey.

Dealing with unexpected changes

It would be nice if we could anticipate all the changes that would occur in a lifetime. Some changes we see coming. Certainly all Latter-day Saint young men are taught to prepare for a full-time mission, a life-changing experience. Every worthy young single adult understands the importance of choosing a spouse and being sealed in the holy temple. We know these changes are coming, and we can plan for them. But what about the changes which are thrust upon us rather unexpectedly? These are changes over which we seemingly have no control. Economic downturn, unemployment, debilitating sickness or injury, divorce, and death are examples of change we do not expect, anticipate, or welcome. How do we deal with such unexpected setbacks in life’s journey?

The answer is the same. By listening to the prophets, keeping an eternal perspective, having faith, and being of good cheer, we can face life’s unexpected challenges and “get on with our lives.”

Faith of Robert Gardner Jr.

The lives of the early pioneers are excellent examples of how we should accept change and overcome challenges and difficulties.

Robert Gardner Jr. was baptized into the Church in January of 1845 in a frozen pond in the backwoods of eastern Canada. Faithful and industrious, he made his

way with his family to Nauvoo and, after much hardship, arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in October of 1847. After entering the valley, they camped at a place called Old Fort, located a few blocks from this Conference Center. In his handwritten history, he recorded, “I unyoked my oxen and sat down on my broken wagon tongue, and said I could not go another day’s journey” (“Robert Gardner Jr. Self History and Journal,” Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, 23).

Starting with nothing, Robert began to create a new life for himself and his family. The first years were hard, but gradually things improved as he and his brother Archibald began to develop mills on Mill Creek and the Jordan River. A few years later he suffered a reversal of fortune. The water powering his mill was taken upstream, leaving his portion of the stream dry. An attempt to build a six-mile canal to the mill failed.

Again from his history: “The canal kept breaking until it proved a failure. The failure caused me to lose all my crops and my mill would not run. My stock was all gone and I was flat broke” (“Robert Gardner Jr. Self History and Journal,” 26).

If that was not test enough, his next entry in his history informs us he has been called on a mission to Canada. A few months later he left his family and with a contingent of missionaries traveled by handcart, steamboat, and railroad to his field of labor.

He completed this mission, returned to his family, and through hard work and diligence once again established himself and began to prosper.

Just a few years later Brother Gardner was entertaining some friends at his farm in Millcreek in the Salt Lake Valley. One remarked, “I am glad to see you so well recovered from being broke. You are nearly as well off as you were before you lost your property and went on your mission.”

Robert’s history records: “My reply was; ‘Yes I was well off once and it all

went off, and I am almost afraid of another [mission] call.' Sure enough, a few hours later some of my neighbors, who had been to a meeting in Salt Lake City called in and told me that my name was amongst a number of names who were called today to go south on a mission to make a new settlement and raise cotton. We were to start right away."

He records, *"I looked and spit, took off my hat and scratched [my head] and thought and said; 'All right'"* ("Robert Gardner Jr. Self History and Journal," 35; italics added).

Robert Gardner knew what it meant to deal with change in his life. He followed the counsel of the Brethren, accepting calls to serve when it was not convenient. He had a great love for the Lord and demonstrated strong, unbending faith with amazing good humor and grace. Robert Gardner Jr. went on to become a leading pioneer in the colonization effort of southern Utah. It is he and countless pioneers like him who give us inspiration to carry on and confront fearlessly the many changes and challenges which come into

our lives. As we move forward and "get on with our lives," may we be obedient, faithful, and cheerful in my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

I might add to Brother Snow's comments that a descendant of Brother Gardner, Hal Gardner, came to my mission in Canada. The first assignment he had was to go to the area where the original Brother Gardner joined the Church and then came to the United States. Elder Gardner who was in our mission also served as the president of a mission.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Redeemer of Israel." Following the singing, we will be pleased to hear from Sister Barbara Thompson, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency. Following her remarks, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

The choir and congregation sang
"Redeemer of Israel."

Barbara Thompson

"His arm is sufficient"

Many years ago while serving on the Relief Society general board, I was on an assignment to teach and train some Relief Society and priesthood leaders. We had arrived just in time for the meeting to begin, after having spent the morning teaching in another city.

I was the first speaker, following the opening song and prayer. The opening song was announced as "The Time Is Far Spent."

I was not familiar with the title of this hymn and thought that it was odd that this was to be the opening song. I hadn't even

spoken, and already they were singing that the time was far spent!

As we began singing the song, I soon realized that it referred to the little time that is remaining to publish the gospel message and bring souls to Christ. The words of the fourth verse ran through my mind the whole evening and many times since then. It says:

Be fixed in your purpose, for Satan will
try you;

The weight of your calling he perfectly
knows.

Your path may be thorny, but Jesus is
nigh you;

His arm is sufficient, tho demons oppose.

His arm is sufficient, tho demons oppose.¹

The message of that verse is that whatever happens in life, Jesus Christ has the power to save. Through His divine sacrifice, He has provided the way for us to gain eternal life. Truly, His work is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”² He has asked for our assistance in helping one another do the things that will lead to eternal life.

Last September in the general Relief Society meeting, Sister Beck outlined three things to help us in our goal to obtain eternal life. They are:

1. “Increase in faith and personal righteousness.”
2. “Strengthen families and homes.”
3. “Serve the Lord and His children.”³

This also means to seek out and care for the poor and needy.

We know Satan will tempt and try us as we seek to do these things, but the Lord has promised that He will strengthen us. He will help us.⁴

Increase in faith and personal righteousness

As a child I was taught by my parents that my Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love me. I was taught that “I am a child of God.”⁵ I can’t remember when I didn’t know this. They taught me that Jesus Christ is our Savior and only through Him can we be saved.⁶

I was also taught that in order for my faith to increase, I needed to pray every day. In fact, I needed to pray always.⁷ I was taught that as I read and studied the scriptures, my knowledge and testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel would grow. I was taught to love God and that I could show my love by keeping His commandments.⁸ I also learned as a child about the importance of the temple. In my

youth I learned that making and keeping sacred temple covenants would keep me on course to eternal life.

Each of us must follow these principles throughout our lives to increase our faith and personal righteousness.

Strengthen families and homes

It is the responsibility and blessing of each of us to strengthen our families and homes. Each of us is in a different family situation. Some families have a mother and father with children at home. Some couples no longer have children at home. Many members of the Church are single, and some are single parents. Others are widows or widowers living alone.

No matter what our family looks like, each of us can work to strengthen our own families or help in strengthening others.

Some ways to strengthen families are illustrated by the following example. I had an assignment in the Boise, Idaho, area. After training on Saturday afternoon, I stayed in the home of my niece and her family. That evening before the children went to bed, we had a short family home evening and a scripture story. Their father told about the family of Lehi and how he taught his children that they must hold fast to the iron rod, which is the word of God.⁹ Holding fast to the iron rod would keep them safe and lead them to joy and happiness. If they should let go of the iron rod, there was danger of drowning in the river of dirty water.

To demonstrate this to the children, their mother became the “iron rod” that they must cling to, and their father played the role of the devil, trying to pull the children away from safety and happiness. The children loved the story and learned how important it is to hold fast to the iron rod.

After the scripture story it was time for family prayer. Their mother reminded the children to pray for the bishop, who was having serious eye problems. Three-year-old Brooklyn offered the prayer that

evening. She thanked Heavenly Father for their blessings, and then she fervently asked Him to “bless the bishop because his eyes are broken.”

The next morning we got to sacrament meeting and got seated. Brooklyn and her five-year-old sister, Kennedy, looked up on the stand and saw the bishop standing there. The girls pointed to the bishop and excitedly said to their mother, “Look, there’s the bishop.” Then a knowing look passed between these two little girls that seemed to say “We prayed for the bishop, and now he is better.” They prayed in faith, knowing that Heavenly Father would hear their humble prayers.

Scriptures, family home evening, and family prayer will strengthen families. We need to take every opportunity to strengthen families and support one another to stay on the right path.

Serve the Lord and His children, and seek out and care for the poor and needy

Throughout His mortal life the Savior taught that we should care for one another and help one another. He healed the sick, caused the lame to walk, restored sight to the blind, and unstopped the ears of the deaf. He taught the people the gospel. He blessed the people and performed many mighty miracles.¹⁰

There are opportunities everywhere to help those in need. I submit to you that at some time in our lives, each of us will be poor in some way and will need the help of another person. For “are we not all beggars?”¹¹

President Spencer W. Kimball said: “God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other.”¹²

Last summer when I was away from home, a fierce wind and rainstorm blew through our neighborhood. A huge tree had fallen from my neighbor’s yard, filling my yard and knocking down power lines.

The tree needed to be removed before the damage could be repaired and power restored to my home.

Early in the morning I called my brother, who planned to find some equipment and come as soon as he could. I also called my bishop. Within minutes my bishop, home teacher, former stake president, and 10 men from my ward were there with their chain saws and made quick work of this disaster. My visiting teachers brought in dinner that evening. Many more men from the high priests group, the elders quorum, and the neighborhood came on subsequent evenings to assist me and my family in cleaning up the mess.

I was needy on that occasion. I needed help from others. My discouragement turned into joy and gratitude. I felt loved and cared for. These people were quick to recognize one in need. They lived their testimony and demonstrated the reality of their covenants.

At Church headquarters we often receive thank-you notes from people not of our Church who have been served by you after a flood, hurricane, earthquake, or other disaster. Thank you for always being willing to serve, love, give, and thus be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

We must be “fixed in [our] purpose”¹³ as we seek to increase in faith and personal righteousness, strengthen our families and homes, and serve the Lord and His children. Though Satan may oppose our efforts, I testify of Jesus Christ and the power of His atoning sacrifice, enabling us to do His will and magnifying our efforts in the process. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. “The Time Is Far Spent,” *Hymns*, no. 266.
2. Moses 1:39.
3. See Julie B. Beck, “Fulfilling the Purpose of Relief Society,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 109–11.
4. See Isaiah 41:10–14.

5. "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301.
6. See Mosiah 3:17.
7. See 3 Nephi 18:15, 18–19; Doctrine and Covenants 10:5.
8. See John 14:15.
9. See 1 Nephi 8:2–37.
10. See Matthew 4:23; 9:35; Luke 4:40; John 2:23; Mosiah 3:5; 3 Nephi 17:7–9; 26:15; Doctrine and Covenants 35:9.
11. Mosiah 4:19.
12. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Abundant Life," *Ensign*, July 1978, 4.
13. "The Time Is Far Spent," *Hymns*, no. 266.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Thank you, Sister Thompson, and thanks to the remarkable women of this Church.

The Savior's solitary task

Brothers and sisters, my Easter-season message today is intended for everyone, but it is directed in a special way to those who are alone or feel alone or, worse yet, feel abandoned. These might include those longing to be married, those who have lost a spouse, and those who have lost—or have never been blessed with—children. Our empathy embraces wives forsaken by their husbands, husbands whose wives have walked away, and children bereft of one or the other of their parents—or both. This group can find within its broad circumference a soldier far from home, a missionary in those first weeks of homesickness, or a father out of work, afraid the fear in his eyes will be visible to his family. In short, it can include all of us at various times in our lives.

To all such, I speak of the loneliest journey ever made and the unending blessings it brought to all in the human family. I speak of the Savior's solitary task of shouldering alone the burden of our salvation. Rightly He would say: "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me. . . . I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold [me]."¹

Rejection and betrayal

As President Uchtdorf so beautifully noted earlier, we know from scripture that Jesus's messianic arrival in Jerusalem on the Sunday preceding Passover, a day directly analogous to this very morning, was a great public moment. But eagerness to continue walking with Him would quickly begin to wane.

Soon enough He was arraigned before the Israelite leaders of the day—first Annas, the former high priest, then Caiaphas, the current high priest. In their rush to judgment these men and their councils declared their verdict quickly and angrily. "What further need have we of witnesses?" they cried. "He is [worthy] of death."²

With that, He was brought before the gentile rulers in the land. Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, interrogated Him once, and Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor in Judea, did so twice, the second time declaring to the crowd, "I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man."³ Then, in an act as unconscionable as it was illogical, Pilate "scourged Jesus, [and] delivered him to be crucified."⁴ Pilate's freshly washed hands could not have been more stained or more unclean.

Such ecclesiastical and political rejection became more personal when the citizenry in the street turned against Jesus as well. It is one of the ironies of history

that sitting with Jesus in prison was a *real* blasphemer, a murderer and revolutionary known as Barabbas, a name or title in Aramaic meaning “son of the father.”⁵ Free to release one prisoner in the spirit of the Passover tradition, Pilate asked the people, “Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?” They said, “Barabbas.”⁶ So one godless “son of the father” was set free, while a truly divine Son of His Heavenly Father moved on to crucifixion.

This was also a telling time among those who knew Jesus more personally. The most difficult to understand in this group is Judas Iscariot. We know the divine plan required Jesus to be crucified, but it is wrenching to think that one of His special witnesses who sat at His feet, heard Him pray, watched Him heal, and felt His touch could betray Him and all that He was for 30 pieces of silver. Never in the history of this world has so little money purchased so much infamy. We are not the ones to judge Judas’s fate, but Jesus said of His betrayer, “Good [were it] for that man if he had not been born.”⁷

A decreasing circle of support

Of course others among the believers had their difficult moments as well. Following the Last Supper, Jesus left Peter, James, and John to wait while He ventured into the Garden of Gethsemane alone. Falling on His face in prayer, “sorrowful . . . unto death,”⁸ the record says, His sweat came as great drops of blood⁹ as He pled with the Father to let this crushing, brutal cup pass from Him. But, of course, it could not pass. Returning from such anguished prayer, He found His three chief disciples asleep, prompting Him to ask, “Could ye not watch with me one hour?”¹⁰ So it happens two more times until on His third return He says compassionately, “Sleep on now, and take your rest,”¹¹ though there would be no rest for Him.

Later, after Jesus’s arrest and appearance at trial, Peter, accused of knowing

Jesus and being one of His confidants, denies that accusation not once but three times. We don’t know all that was going on here, nor do we know of protective counsel which the Savior may have given to His Apostles privately,¹² but we do know Jesus was aware that even these precious ones would not stand with Him in the end, and He had warned Peter accordingly.¹³ Then, with the crowing of the cock, “the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord. . . . And [he] went out, and wept bitterly.”¹⁴

Thus, of divine necessity, the supporting circle around Jesus gets smaller and smaller and smaller, giving significance to Matthew’s words: “All the disciples [left] him, and fled.”¹⁵ Peter stayed near enough to be recognized and confronted. John stood at the foot of the cross with Jesus’s mother. Especially and always the blessed women in the Savior’s life stayed as close to Him as they could. But essentially His lonely journey back to His Father continued without comfort or companionship.

The withdrawal of the Father

Now I speak very carefully, even reverently, of what may have been the most difficult moment in all of this solitary journey to atonement. I speak of those final moments for which Jesus must have been prepared intellectually and physically but which He may not have fully anticipated emotionally and spiritually—that concluding descent into the paralyzing despair of divine withdrawal when He cries in *ultimate* loneliness, “My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me?”¹⁶

The loss of mortal support He had anticipated, but apparently He had not comprehended *this*. Had He not said to His disciples, “Behold, the hour . . . is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me” and “The Father hath not left

me alone; for I do always those things that please him”?¹⁷

With all the conviction of my soul I testify that He *did* please His Father perfectly and that a perfect Father did *not* forsake His Son in that hour. Indeed, it is my personal belief that in all of Christ’s mortal ministry the Father may never have been closer to His Son than in these agonizing final moments of suffering. Nevertheless, that the supreme sacrifice of His Son might be as complete as it was voluntary and solitary, the Father briefly withdrew from Jesus the comfort of His Spirit, the support of His personal presence. It was required, indeed it was central to the significance of the Atonement, that this perfect Son who had never spoken ill nor done wrong nor touched an unclean thing had to know how the rest of humankind—us, all of us—would feel when we did commit such sins. For His Atonement to be infinite and eternal, He had to feel what it was like to die not only physically but spiritually, to sense what it was like to have the divine Spirit withdraw, leaving one feeling totally, abjectly, hopelessly alone.

But Jesus held on. He pressed on. The goodness in Him allowed faith to triumph even in a state of complete anguish. The trust He lived by told Him in spite of His feelings that divine compassion is never absent, that God is always faithful, that He never flees nor fails us. When the uttermost farthing had then been paid, when Christ’s determination to be faithful was as obvious as it was utterly invincible, finally and mercifully, it was “finished.”¹⁸ Against all odds and with none to help or uphold Him, Jesus of Nazareth, the living Son of the living God, restored physical life where death had held sway and brought joyful, spiritual redemption out of sin, hellish darkness, and despair. With faith in the God He *knew* was there, He could say in triumph, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”¹⁹

We will never be left alone

Brothers and sisters, one of the great consolations of this Easter season is that because Jesus walked such a long, lonely path utterly alone, *we* do not have to do so. His solitary journey brought great company for our little version of that path—the merciful care of our Father in Heaven, the unfailing companionship of this Beloved Son, the consummate gift of the Holy Ghost, angels in heaven, family members on both sides of the veil, prophets and apostles, teachers, leaders, friends. All of these and more have been given as companions for our mortal journey because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the Restoration of His gospel. Trumpeted from the summit of Calvary is the truth that we will never be left alone nor unaided, even if sometimes we may feel that we are. Truly the Redeemer of us all said, “I will not leave you comfortless: [My Father and] I will come to you [and abide with you].”²⁰

My other plea at Easter time is that these scenes of Christ’s lonely sacrifice, laced with moments of denial and abandonment and, at least once, outright betrayal, must *never* be reenacted by us. He has walked alone once. Now, may I ask that never again will He have to confront sin without our aid and assistance, that never again will He find only unresponsive onlookers when He sees you and me along His *Via Dolorosa* in our present day. As we approach this holy week—Passover Thursday with its Paschal Lamb, atoning Friday with its cross, Resurrection Sunday with its empty tomb—may we declare ourselves to be more fully disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, not in word only and not only in the flush of comfortable times but in deed and in courage and in faith, including when the path is lonely and when our cross is difficult to bear. This Easter week and always, may we stand by Jesus Christ “at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until

death,”²¹ for surely that is how He stood by us when it *was* unto death and when He had to stand entirely and utterly alone. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Isaiah 63:3, 5; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:107; 88:106; 133:50.
2. Matthew 26:65–66; see footnote 66*b*.
3. Luke 23:14.
4. Matthew 27:26.
5. See Bible Dictionary, “Barabbas,” 619.
6. Matthew 27:21.
7. Matthew 26:24.
8. Matthew 26:38.
9. See Luke 22:44; Mosiah 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
10. Matthew 26:40.
11. Matthew 26:45.
12. See Spencer W. Kimball, *Peter, My Brother*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (July 13, 1971), 5.
13. See Mark 14:27–31.
14. Luke 22:61–62.
15. Matthew 26:56.
16. Matthew 27:46; italics added.
17. John 16:32; 8:29.
18. See John 19:30.

19. Luke 23:46.

20. John 14:18; see also verse 23.

21. Mosiah 18:9.

The choir sang “This Is My Beloved Son.”

President Monson

The choir just sang “This Is My Beloved Son.”

We express our thanks to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning and to those who have spoken to us in this session of the conference.

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Presidency of the Seventy. The concluding session of the conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

My dear brothers and sisters, I express my love to you. I am humbled by the responsibility to address you, and yet I am grateful for the opportunity to do so.

Be of good cheer

Since last we met together in a general conference six months ago, there have been continuing signs that circumstances in the world aren’t necessarily as we would wish. The global economy, which six months ago appeared to be sagging, seems to have taken a nosedive, and for many weeks now the financial outlook has been somewhat grim. In addition, the moral footings of society continue to slip, while those who attempt to safeguard

those footings are often ridiculed and, at times, picketed and persecuted. Wars, natural disasters, and personal misfortunes continue to occur.

It would be easy to become discouraged and cynical about the future—or even fearful of what might come—if we allowed ourselves to dwell only on that which is wrong in the world and in our lives. Today, however, I’d like us to turn our thoughts and our attitudes away from the troubles around us and to focus instead on our blessings as members of the Church. The Apostle Paul declared, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”¹

None of us makes it through this life without problems and challenges—and sometimes tragedies and misfortunes. After all, in large part we are here to learn and grow from such events in our lives. We know that there are times when we will suffer, when we will grieve, and when we will be saddened. However, we are told, “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.”²

How might we have joy in our lives, despite all that we may face? Again from the scriptures: “Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you.”³

The history of the Church in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, is replete with the experiences of those who have struggled and yet who have remained steadfast and of good cheer as they have made the gospel of Jesus Christ the center of their lives. This attitude is what will pull us through whatever comes our way. It will not remove our troubles from us but rather will enable us to face our challenges, to meet them head on, and to emerge victorious.

Too numerous to mention are the examples of all the individuals who have faced difficult circumstances and yet who have persevered and prevailed because their faith in the gospel and in the Savior has given them the strength they have needed. This morning, however, I’d like to share with you three such examples.

Pioneer journey of Condie family

First, from my own family, I mention a touching experience that has always been an inspiration to me.

My maternal great-grandparents Gibson and Cecelia Sharp Condie lived in Clackmannan, Scotland. Their families were engaged in coal mining. They were at peace with the world, surrounded by relatives and friends, and were housed in fairly comfortable quarters in a land they loved. Then they listened to the message of the missionaries from The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and, to the depths of their very souls, were converted. They heard the call to gather to Zion and knew they must answer that call.

Sometime around 1848, they sold their possessions and prepared for the hazardous voyage across the mighty Atlantic Ocean. With five small children, they boarded a sailing vessel, all their worldly possessions in one tiny trunk. They traveled 3,000 miles across the waters—eight long, weary weeks on a treacherous sea, watching and waiting, with poor food, poor water, and no help beyond the length and breadth of that small ship.

In the midst of this soul-trying situation, one of their young sons became ill. There were no doctors, no stores at which they might purchase medicine to ease his suffering. They watched, they prayed, they waited, and they wept as day by day his condition deteriorated. When his eyes were at last closed in death, their hearts were torn asunder. To add to their grief, the laws of the sea must be obeyed. Wrapped in a canvas weighed down with iron, the little body was consigned to a watery grave. As they sailed away, only those parents knew the crushing blow dealt to wounded hearts.⁴ However, with a faith born of their deep conviction of the truth and their love of the Lord, Gibson and Cecelia held on. They were comforted by the words of the Lord: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”⁵

How grateful I am for ancestors who had the faith to leave hearth and home and to journey to Zion, who made sacrifices I can scarcely imagine. I thank my Heavenly Father for the example of faith, of courage, and of determination Gibson and Cecelia Sharp Condie provide for me and for all their posterity.

A blind man’s gratitude for gospel light

I introduce next a gentle, faith-filled man who epitomized the peace and joy

which the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring into one's life.

Late one evening on a Pacific isle, a small boat slipped silently to its berth at the crude pier. Two Polynesian women helped Meli Mulipola from the boat and guided him to the well-worn pathway leading to the village road. The women marveled at the bright stars, which twinkled in the midnight sky. The moonlight guided them along their way. However, Meli Mulipola could not appreciate these delights of nature—the moon, the stars, the sky—for he was blind.

Brother Mulipola's vision had been normal until a fateful day when, while working on a pineapple plantation, light turned suddenly to darkness and day became perpetual night. He was depressed and despondent until he learned the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. His life was brought into compliance with the teachings of the Church, and he once again felt hope and joy.

Brother Mulipola and his loved ones had made a long voyage, having learned that one who held the priesthood of God was visiting among the islands of the Pacific. He sought a blessing, and it was my privilege, along with another who held the Melchizedek Priesthood, to provide that blessing to him. As we finished, I noted that tears were streaming from his sightless eyes, coursing down his brown cheeks, and tumbling finally upon his native dress. He dropped to his knees and prayed:

"O God, Thou knowest I am blind. Thy servants have blessed me that my sight might return. Whether in Thy wisdom I see light or whether I see darkness all the days of my life, I will be eternally grateful for the truth of Thy gospel, which I now see and which provides the light of my life."

He rose to his feet and, smiling, thanked us for providing the blessing. He then disappeared into the still of the night. Silently he came; silently he departed. But his

presence I shall never forget. I reflected upon the message of the Master: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."⁶

My brothers and sisters, each of us has that light in his or her life. We are not left to walk alone, no matter how dark our pathway.

I love the words penned by M. Louise Haskins:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light, that I may tread safely into the unknown!"

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than [a] light and safer than a known way."⁷

A woman's postwar ordeal

The setting for my final example of one who persevered and ultimately prevailed, despite overwhelmingly difficult circumstances, begins in East Prussia following World War II.

In about March 1946, less than a year after the end of the war, Ezra Taft Benson, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, accompanied by Frederick W. Babbel, was assigned a special postwar tour of Europe for the express purpose of meeting with the Saints, assessing their needs, and providing assistance to them. Elder Benson and Brother Babbel later recounted, from a testimony they heard, the experience of a Church member who found herself in an area no longer controlled by the government under which she had resided.

She and her husband had lived an idyllic life in East Prussia. Then had come the second great world war within their lifetimes. Her beloved young husband was killed during the final days of the frightful battles in their homeland, leaving her alone to care for their four children.

The occupying forces determined that the Germans in East Prussia must go to Western Germany to seek a new home. The woman was German, and so it was necessary for her to go. The journey was over a thousand miles, and she had no way to accomplish it but on foot. She was allowed to take only such bare necessities as she could load into her small wooden-wheeled wagon. Besides her children and these meager possessions, she took with her a strong faith in God and in the gospel as revealed to the latter-day prophet Joseph Smith.

She and the children began the journey in late summer. Having neither food nor money among her few possessions, she was forced to gather a daily subsistence from the fields and forests along the way. She was constantly faced with dangers from panic-stricken refugees and plundering troops.

As the days turned into weeks and the weeks to months, the temperatures dropped below freezing. Each day, she stumbled over the frozen ground, her smallest child—a baby—in her arms. Her three other children struggled along behind her, with the oldest—seven years old—pulling the tiny wooden wagon containing their belongings. Ragged and torn burlap was wrapped around their feet, providing the only protection for them, since their shoes had long since disintegrated. Their thin, tattered jackets covered their thin, tattered clothing, providing their only protection against the cold.

Soon the snows came, and the days and nights became a nightmare. In the evenings she and the children would try to find some kind of shelter—a barn or a shed—and would huddle together for warmth, with a few thin blankets from the wagon on top of them.

She constantly struggled to force from her mind overwhelming fears that they would perish before reaching their destination.

And then one morning the unthinkable happened. As she awakened, she felt a chill in her heart. The tiny form of her three-year-old daughter was cold and still, and she realized that death had claimed the child. Though overwhelmed with grief, she knew that she must take the other children and travel on. First, however, she used the only implement she had—a tablespoon—to dig a grave in the frozen ground for her tiny, precious child.

Death, however, was to be her companion again and again on the journey. Her seven-year-old son died, either from starvation or from freezing or both. Again her only shovel was the tablespoon, and again she dug hour after hour to lay his mortal remains gently into the earth. Next, her five-year-old son died, and again she used her tablespoon as a shovel.

Her despair was all-consuming. She had only her tiny baby daughter left, and the poor thing was failing. Finally, as she was reaching the end of her journey, the baby died in her arms. The spoon was gone now, so hour after hour she dug a grave in the frozen earth with her bare fingers. Her grief became unbearable. How could she possibly be kneeling in the snow at the graveside of her last child? She had lost her husband and all her children. She had given up her earthly goods, her home, and even her homeland.

In this moment of overwhelming sorrow and complete bewilderment, she felt her heart would literally break. In despair she contemplated how she might end her own life, as so many of her fellow countrymen were doing. How easy it would be to jump off a nearby bridge, she thought, or to throw herself in front of an oncoming train.

And then, as these thoughts assailed her, something within her said, “Get down on your knees and pray.” She ignored the prompting until she could resist it no longer. She knelt and prayed more fervently than she had in her entire life:

“Dear Heavenly Father, I do not know how I can go on. I have nothing left—except my faith in Thee. I feel, Father, amidst the desolation of my soul, an overwhelming gratitude for the atoning sacrifice of Thy Son, Jesus Christ. I cannot express adequately my love for Him. I know that because He suffered and died, I shall live again with my family; that because He broke the chains of death, I shall see my children again and will have the joy of raising them. Though I do not at this moment wish to live, I will do so, that we may be reunited as a family and return—together—to Thee.”

When she finally reached her destination of Karlsruhe, Germany, she was emaciated. Brother Babbel said that her face was a purple-gray, her eyes red and swollen, her joints protruding. She was literally in the advanced stages of starvation. In a Church meeting shortly thereafter, she bore a glorious testimony, stating that of all the ailing people in her saddened land, she was one of the happiest because she knew that God lived, that Jesus is the Christ, and that He died and was resurrected so that we might live again. She testified that she knew if she continued faithful and true to the end, she would be reunited with those she had lost and would be saved in the celestial kingdom of God.⁸

“Their joy shall be full forever”

From the holy scriptures we read, “Behold, the righteous, the saints of the Holy One of Israel, they who have believed in [Him], they who have endured the crosses of the world, . . . they shall inherit the kingdom of God, . . . and their joy shall be full forever.”⁹

I testify to you that our promised blessings are beyond measure. Though the storm clouds may gather, though the rains may pour down upon us, our knowledge of the gospel and our love of our Heavenly Father and of our Savior will comfort and sustain us and bring joy to our hearts as we walk uprightly and keep the commandments. There will be nothing in this world that can defeat us.

My beloved brothers and sisters, fear not. Be of good cheer. The future is as bright as your faith.

I declare that God lives and that He hears and answers our prayers. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and our Redeemer. Heaven’s blessings await us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Timothy 1:7.
2. 2 Nephi 2:25.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.
4. Adapted from Thomas A. Condie, “History of Gibson and Cecelia Sharp Condie” (1937); unpublished.
5. John 16:33.
6. John 8:12.
7. From “The Gate of the Year,” in James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 92.
8. From personal conversations and from Frederick W. Babbel, *On Wings of Faith* (1972), 40–42.
9. 2 Nephi 9:18.

The choir sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

Elder Donald L. Hallstrom offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 179th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday,

April 5, 2009. President Henry B. Eyring conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Mack Wilberg and Edgar Thompson directed the choir, and Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists. President Eyring made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Henry B. Eyring

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 179th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Eyring, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under

the direction of Mack Wilberg and Edgar Thompson, with Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Now We’ll Sing with One Accord.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Spencer V. Jones of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Now We’ll Sing with One Accord.”

Elder Spencer V. Jones offered the invocation.

The choir sang “O My Father.”

President Eyring

The choir has sung “O My Father.”

We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Dallin H. Oaks and David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the Seventy.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Unselfish service

Our Savior gave Himself in unselfish service. He taught that each of us should follow Him by denying ourselves of selfish interests in order to serve others.

“If any man will come after me [He said], let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:24–25; see also Matthew 10:39).

Latter-day Saint commitment to service

As a group, Latter-day Saints are unique in following that teaching—unique in the extent of their unselfish service.

Each year tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints submit their papers for full-time missionary service. Seniors put aside the diversions of retirement, the comforts of home, and the loving companionship of children and grandchildren and go forth to serve strangers in unfamiliar places. Young men and women put work and education on hold and make themselves available to serve wherever they are assigned. Hundreds of thousands of faithful members participate in the unselfish service we call “temple work,” which has no motive other than love and service for our fellowmen, living and dead. The same unselfish service is given by legions of officers and teachers in our stakes and wards and branches. All are uncompensated in worldly terms but committed to Christlike service to their fellowmen.

It is not easy to give up our personal priorities and desires. Many years ago a new missionary in England was frustrated and discouraged. He wrote home saying he felt he was wasting his time. His wise father replied, “Forget yourself and go to work.”¹ Young Elder Gordon B. Hinckley went to his knees and covenanted with the Lord that he would try to forget himself and lose himself in the Lord’s service.² Years later, as a mature servant of the Lord, Elder Hinckley would say, “He who lives only unto himself withers and dies, while he who forgets himself in the service of others grows and blossoms in this life and in eternity.”³

Last January, President Thomas S. Monson taught Brigham Young University students that their student days should include “the matter of spiritual preparation,” including service to others. “An attitude of love characterized the mission of the Master,” President Monson said. “He gave sight to the blind, legs to the lame, and life to the dead. Perhaps when we [face] our Maker, we will not be asked, ‘How many positions did you hold?’ but rather, ‘How many people did you help?’ In reality,” President Monson concluded, “you can never love the Lord until you serve Him by serving His people.”⁴

A familiar example of losing ourselves in the service of others—this one not unique to Latter-day Saints—is the sacrifice parents make for their children. Mothers suffer pain and loss of personal priorities and comforts to bear and rear each child. Fathers adjust their lives and priorities to support a family. The gap between those who are and those who are not willing to do this is widening in today’s world. One of our family members recently overheard a young couple on an airline flight explaining that they chose to have a dog instead of children. “Dogs are less trouble,” they declared. “Dogs don’t talk back, and we never have to ground them.”

We rejoice that so many Latter-day Saint couples are among that unselfish

group who are willing to surrender their personal priorities and serve the Lord by bearing and rearing the children our Heavenly Father sends to their care. We also rejoice in those who care for disabled family members and aged parents. None of this service asks, what’s in it for me? All of it requires setting aside personal convenience for unselfish service. All of it stands in contrast to the fame, fortune, and other immediate gratification that are the worldly ways of so many in our day.

Latter-day Saints are uniquely committed to sacrifice. In partaking of the sacrament each week, we witness our commitment to serve the Lord and our fellowmen. In sacred temple ceremonies we covenant to sacrifice and consecrate our time and talents for the welfare of others.

Cooperative efforts

Latter-day Saints are also renowned for their ability to unite in cooperative efforts. The Mormon pioneers who colonized the Intermountain West established our honored tradition of unselfish cooperation for the common good. Following in this tradition are our modern “Helping Hands” projects in many nations.⁵ In recent elections Latter-day Saints have united with other like-minded persons in efforts to defend marriage. For some, that service has involved great sacrifice and continuing personal pain.

Our members’ religious faith and Church service have taught them how to work in cooperative efforts to benefit the larger community. Because of this, Latter-day Saint volunteers are in great demand in education, local government, charitable causes, and countless other efforts that call for high skills in cooperative efforts and unselfish sacrifice of time and means.

Some attribute our members’ willingness to sacrifice and their skills in cooperative efforts to our effective Church organization or to what skeptics mistakenly call “blind obedience.” Neither

explanation is correct. No outside copying of our organization and no application of blind obedience could duplicate the record of this Church or the performance of its members. Our willingness to sacrifice and our skills in cooperative efforts come from our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, from the inspired teachings of our leaders, and from the commitments and covenants we knowingly make.

Some seek praise of the world

Unfortunately, some Latter-day Saints seem to forgo unselfish service to others, choosing instead to fix their priorities on the standards and values of the world. Jesus cautioned that Satan desires to sift us like wheat (see Luke 22:31; 3 Nephi 18:18), which means to make us common like all those around us. But Jesus taught that we who follow Him should be precious and unique, “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13) and “the light of the world” to shine forth to all men (Matthew 5:14, 16; see also 3 Nephi 18:24).

We do not serve our Savior well if we fear man more than God. He rebuked some leaders in His restored Church for seeking the praise of the world and for having their minds on the things of the earth more than on the things of the Lord (see D&C 30:2; 58:39). Those chastisements remind us that we are called to establish the Lord’s standards, not to follow the world’s. Elder John A. Widtsoe declared, “We cannot walk as other men, or talk as other men, or do as other men, for we have a different destiny, obligation, and responsibility placed upon us, and we must fit ourselves [to it].”⁶ That reality has current application to every trendy action, including immodest dress. As a wise friend observed, “You can’t be a life saver if you look like all the other swimmers on the beach.”⁷

Those who are caught up in trying to save their lives by seeking the praise of the world are actually rejecting the Savior’s teaching that the only way to save our eter-

nal life is to love one another and lose our lives in service.

C. S. Lewis explained this teaching of the Savior: “The moment you have a self at all, there is a possibility of putting yourself first—wanting to be the centre—wanting to be God, in fact. That was the sin of Satan: and that was the sin he taught the human race. Some people think the fall of man had something to do with sex, but that is a mistake. . . . *What Satan put into the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they could ‘be like gods’—could set up on their own as if they had created themselves—be their own masters—invent some sort of happiness for themselves outside God, apart from God.* And out of that hopeless attempt has come . . . the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.”⁸

A selfish person is more interested in pleasing man—especially himself—than in pleasing God. He looks only to his own needs and desires. He walks “in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world” (D&C 1:16). Such a person becomes disconnected from the covenant promises of God (see D&C 1:15) and from the mortal friendship and assistance we all need in these tumultuous times. In contrast, if we love and serve one another as the Savior taught, we remain connected to our covenants and to our associates.

We live in a time of selfishness

We live in a time when sacrifice is definitely out of fashion, when the outside forces that taught our ancestors the need for unselfish cooperative service have diminished. Someone has called this the “me” generation—a selfish time when everyone seems to be asking, what’s in it for me? Even some who should know better seem to be straining to win the praise of those who mock and scoff from the “great and spacious building” identified in vision

as the pride of the world (see 1 Nephi 8:26–28; 11:35–36).

The worldly aspiration of our day is to get something for nothing. The ancient evil of greed shows its face in the assertion of entitlement: I am entitled to this or that because of who I am—a son or a daughter, a citizen, a victim, or a member of some other group. Entitlement is generally selfish. It demands much, and it gives little or nothing. Its very concept causes us to seek to elevate ourselves above those around us. This separates us from the divine, evenhanded standard of reward that when anyone obtains any blessing from God, it is by obedience to the law on which that blessing is predicated (see D&C 130:21).

The effects of greed and entitlement are evident in the multimillion-dollar bonuses of some corporate executives. But the examples are more widespread than that. Greed and ideas of entitlement have also fueled the careless and widespread borrowing and excessive consumerism behind the financial crises that threaten to engulf the world.

Gambling is another example of greed and selfishness. The gambler ventures a minimum amount in the hope of a huge return that comes by taking it away from others. No matter how it is disguised, getting something for nothing is contrary to the gospel law of the harvest: “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7; see also 2 Corinthians 9:6).

The values of the world wrongly teach that “it’s all about me.” That corrupting attitude produces no change and no growth. It is contrary to eternal progress toward the destiny God has identified in His great plan for His children. The plan of the gospel of Jesus Christ lifts us above our selfish desires and teaches us that this life is all about what we can become.

Losing ourselves in service

A great example of unselfish service is the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta, whose vow committed herself and her fellow

workers to “wholehearted free service to the poorest of the poor.”⁹ She taught that “one thing will always secure heaven for us—the acts of charity and kindness with which we have filled our lives.”¹⁰ “We can do no great things,” Mother Teresa maintained, “only small things with great love.”¹¹ When this wonderful Catholic servant died, the First Presidency’s message of condolence declared, “Her life of unselfish service is an inspiration to all the world, and her acts of Christian goodness will stand as a memorial for generations to come.”¹² That is what the Savior called losing our lives in service to others.

Each of us should apply that principle to our attitudes in attending church. Some say “I didn’t learn anything today” or “No one was friendly to me” or “I was offended” or “The Church is not filling my needs.” All those answers are self-centered, and all retard spiritual growth.

In contrast, a wise friend wrote:

“Years ago, I changed my attitude about going to church. No longer do I go to church for my sake, but to think of others. I make a point of saying hello to people who sit alone, to welcome visitors, . . . to volunteer for an assignment. . . .

“In short, I go to church each week with the intent of being active, not passive, and making a positive difference in people’s lives. Consequently, my attendance at Church meetings is so much more enjoyable and fulfilling.”¹³

All of this illustrates the eternal principle that we are happier and more fulfilled when we act and serve for what we give, not for what we get.

Our Savior teaches us to follow Him by making the sacrifices necessary to lose ourselves in unselfish service to others. If we do, He promises us eternal life, “the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7), the glory and joy of living in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. I testify of Them and of Their great plan for the salvation of Their children, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Gordon B. Hinckley, "Taking the Gospel to Britain: A Declaration of Vision, Faith, Courage, and Truth," *Ensign*, July 1987, 7.
2. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "Taking the Gospel to Britain," 7.
3. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 588.
4. Thomas S. Monson, "Great Expectations" (Church Educational System fireside for young adults, Jan. 11, 2009), www.ldsces.org.
5. See "Mormon Helping Hands Completes First Decade of Service," *Ensign*, Jan. 2009, 74–75.
6. John A. Widtsoe, in Conference Report, Apr. 1940, 36.
7. Ardeth Greene Kapp, *I Walk by Faith* (1987), 97.
8. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1980), 49; italics added.
9. In *The Joy in Loving: A Guide to Daily Living with Mother Teresa*, comp. Jaya Chaliha and Edward Le Joly (1996), 15.
10. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, *Life in the Spirit*, ed. Kathryn Spink (1983), 42.
11. Mother Teresa, *Life in the Spirit*, 45.
12. First Presidency statement, in "News of the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 110.
13. Mark Skousen to Dallin H. Oaks, Feb. 15, 2009.

Elder David A. Bednar

A focus on the temple

Shortly after I was called to serve as a stake president in 1987, I talked with a good friend who recently had been released as a stake president. During our conversation I asked him what he would teach me about becoming an effective stake president. His answer to my question had a profound impact upon my subsequent service and ministry.

My friend indicated he had been called to serve as a temple worker soon after his release. He then said: "I wish I had been a temple worker before I was a stake president. If I had served in the temple before my call to serve as a stake president, I would have been a very different stake president."

I was intrigued by his answer and asked him to explain further. He responded: "I believe I was a good stake president. The programs in our stake ran well, and our statistics were above average. But serving in the temple has expanded my vision. If I were called today to serve as a stake president, my primary focus would be on worthiness to receive and honor temple

covenants. I would strive to make temple preparation the center of all that we did. I would do a better job of shepherding the Saints to the house of the Lord."

That brief conversation with my friend helped me as a stake president to teach relentlessly about and testify of the eternal importance of temple ordinances, temple covenants, and temple worship. The deepest desire of our presidency was for every member of the stake to receive the blessings of the temple, to be worthy of and to use frequently a temple recommend.

My message today focuses upon the blessings of the temple, and I pray the Holy Ghost will illuminate our minds, penetrate our hearts, and bear witness of truth to each of us.

The divine purpose of gathering

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that in all ages the divine purpose of gathering the people of God is to build temples so His children can receive the highest ordinances and thereby gain eternal life (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 415–17).

This essential relationship between the principle of gathering and the building of temples is highlighted in the Book of Mormon:

“Behold, the field was ripe, and blessed are ye, for ye did thrust in the sickle, and did reap with your might, yea, all the day long did ye labor; and behold the number of your sheaves! And they shall be gathered into the garners, that they are not wasted” (Alma 26:5).

The sheaves in this analogy represent newly baptized members of the Church. The garners are the holy temples. Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained: “Clearly, when we baptize, our eyes should gaze beyond the baptismal font to the holy temple. The great garner into which the sheaves should be gathered is the holy temple” (in John L. Hart, “Make Calling Focus of Your Mission,” *Church News*, Sept. 17, 1994, 4). This instruction clarifies and emphasizes the importance of sacred temple ordinances and covenants—that the sheaves may not be wasted.

“Yea, they shall not be beaten down by the storm at the last day; yea, neither shall they be harrowed up by the whirlwinds; but when the storm cometh they shall be gathered together in their place, that the storm cannot penetrate to them; yea, neither shall they be driven with fierce winds whithersoever the enemy listeth to carry them” (Alma 26:6).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has explained that in renewing our baptismal covenants by partaking of the emblems of the sacrament, “we do not witness that we *take upon us* the name of Jesus Christ. [Rather,] we witness that we are *willing* to do so. (See D&C 20:77.) The fact that we only witness to our willingness suggests that something else must happen before we actually take that sacred name upon us in the [ultimate and] most important sense” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 102; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 81; italics in original). The baptismal covenant clearly contemplates a future

event or events and looks forward to the temple.

In modern revelations the Lord refers to temples as houses “built unto my name” (D&C 105:33; see also D&C 109:2–5; 124:39). In the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph Smith petitioned the Father “that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them” (D&C 109:22). He also asked for a blessing “over thy people upon whom thy name shall be put in this house” (verse 26). And as the Lord appeared in and accepted the Kirtland Temple as His house, He declared, “For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house” (D&C 110:7).

These scriptures help us understand that the process of taking upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ that is commenced in the waters of baptism is continued and enlarged in the house of the Lord. As we stand in the waters of baptism, we look to the temple. As we partake of the sacrament, we look to the temple. We pledge to always remember the Savior and to keep His commandments as preparation to participate in the sacred ordinances of the temple and receive the highest blessings available through the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, in the ordinances of the holy temple we more completely and fully take upon us the name of Jesus Christ.

“And this greater [or Melchizedek] priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

“Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

“And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh” (D&C 84:19–21).

**No combination of wickedness
shall prevail over thy people**

We live in a great day of temple building around the world. And the adversary surely is mindful of the increasing number of temples that now dot the earth. As always, the building and dedicating of these sacred structures are accompanied by opposition from enemies of the Church as well as by ill-advised criticism from some within the Church.

Such antagonism is not new. In 1861, while the Salt Lake Temple was under construction, Brigham Young encouraged the Saints: "If you wish this Temple built, go to work and do all you can. . . . Some say, 'I do not like to do it, for we never began to build a Temple without the bells of hell beginning to ring.' I want to hear them ring again. All the tribes of hell will be on the move, . . . but what do you think it will amount to? You have all the time seen what it has amounted to" (*Deseret News*, Apr. 10, 1861, 41).

We as faithful Saints have been strengthened by adversity and are the recipients of the Lord's tender mercies. We have moved forward under the promise of the Lord: "I will not suffer that [mine enemies] shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil" (D&C 10:43).

For many years Sister Bednar and I hosted faithful men and women as devotional speakers at Brigham Young University–Idaho. Many of these speakers were emeritus or released members of the Seventy who had served as temple presidents following their service as General Authorities. As we talked with these stalwart leaders, I always asked this question: "What have you learned as a temple president that you wish you had better understood when you were a General Authority?"

As I listened to their answers, I discovered a consistent theme that I would summarize as follows: "I have come to

understand better the protection available through our temple covenants and what it means to make an acceptable offering of temple worship. There is a difference between church-attending, tithe-paying members who occasionally rush into the temple to go through a session and those members who faithfully and consistently worship in the temple."

The similarity of their answers impressed me greatly. Each response to my question focused upon the protecting power of the ordinances and covenants available in the house of the Lord. Their answers precisely paralleled the promises contained in the dedicatory prayer offered upon the Kirtland Temple in 1836:

"We ask thee, Holy Father, to establish the people that shall worship, and honorably hold a name and standing in this thy house, to all generations and for eternity;

"That no weapon formed against them shall prosper; that he who diggeth a pit for them shall fall into the same himself;

"That no combination of wickedness shall have power to rise up and prevail over thy people upon whom thy name shall be put in this house;

"And if any people shall rise against this people, that thine anger be kindled against them;

"And if they shall smite this people thou wilt smite them; thou wilt fight for thy people as thou didst in the day of battle, that they may be delivered from the hands of all their enemies" (D&C 109:24–28).

Please consider these verses in light of the current raging of the adversary and what we have discussed about our willingness to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and the blessing of protection promised to those who honorably hold a name and standing in the holy temple. Significantly, these covenant blessings are to all generations and for all eternity. I invite you to study repeatedly and ponder prayerfully the implications of these scriptures in your life and for your family.

We should not be surprised by Satan's efforts to thwart or discredit temple worship and work. The devil despises the purity in and the power of the Lord's house. And the protection available to each of us in and through temple ordinances and covenants stands as a great obstacle to the evil designs of Lucifer.

The fire of the covenant

The exodus from Nauvoo in September of 1846 caused unimaginable hardship for the faithful Latter-day Saints. Many sought shelter in camps along the Mississippi River. When word reached Brigham Young at Winter Quarters about the condition of these refugees, he immediately sent a letter across the river to Council Point encouraging the brethren to help—reminding them of the covenant made in the Nauvoo Temple. He counseled: “Now is the time for labor. Let the fire of the covenant which you made in the House of the Lord, burn in your hearts, like flame unquenchable” (in *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Sept. 28, 1846, 5). Within days, wagons were rolling eastward to rescue the struggling Saints.

What was it that gave those early Saints such strength? It was the fire of the temple covenant that burned in their hearts. It was their commitment to worship and honorably hold a name and standing in the house of the Lord.

We do now and will yet face great challenges to the work of the Lord. But like the pioneers who found the place which God for them prepared, so we will fresh courage take, knowing our God will never us forsake (see “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30). Today temples dot the earth as sacred places of ordinances and covenants, of edification, and of refuge from the storm.

Invitations and commendation

The Lord declared, “I must gather together my people, . . . that the wheat may be secured in the garner to possess eternal life, and be crowned with celestial glory” (D&C 101:65).

Within the sound of my voice are many young women, young men, and children. I plead with you to be worthy, to be steadfast, and to look forward with great anticipation to the day you will receive the ordinances and blessings of the temple.

Within the sound of my voice are individuals who should have but have not yet received the ordinances of the house of the Lord. Whatever the reason, however long the delay, I invite you to begin making the spiritual preparations so you can receive the blessings available only in the holy temple. Please cast away the things in your life that stand in the way. Please seek after the things that are of eternal consequence.

Within the sound of my voice are individuals who have received the ordinances of the temple and for various reasons have not returned to the house of the Lord in quite some time. Please repent, prepare, and do whatever needs to be done so you can again worship in the temple and more fully remember and honor your sacred covenants.

Within the sound of my voice are many individuals who hold current temple recommendations and strive worthily to use them. I commend you for your faithfulness and devotion.

I bear solemn witness that the fire of the covenant will burn in the heart of every faithful member of this Church who shall worship and honorably hold a name and standing in the Lord's holy house. Jesus the Christ is our Redeemer and Savior. He lives, and He directs the affairs of His Church through revelation to His anointed servants. Of these things I bear witness in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Gary E. Stevenson

What a wonderful conference it has been. How blessed we are to hear the counsel of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators.

The temple provides direction

I remember a warm, sunny afternoon when spring was trying to nudge its way through a long winter in Cache Valley, Utah. My father, whose Saturdays were always filled with chores for his grandsons, stopped by our home with an offer to “go for a ride.” Always happy to ride in Grandpa’s truck, our four- and six-year-old sons scurried into the back jump seat, and I joined my father in the front. Our drive took us through the streets of downtown Logan, which wrap around the Logan Temple, prominently situated on a hill, centered beautifully in the city. As we moved further away from the city, we turned from paved, busy streets to seldom-used dirt roads, where we crossed old bridges and weaved through trees far into the country. We were far from any other traffic and all alone.

Realizing his grandsons were in a place they had not been before, my father stopped the truck. “Do you think we are lost?” he asked the wide-eyed boys as they gazed out the windshield across the valley. Followed by a moment of silent assessment came the profound reply of a young child. “Look,” he said, pointing his finger. “Grandpa, you are never lost when you can see the temple.” Our eyes turned, focusing with his, seeing the sun glistening off the spires of the Logan Temple, far across the valley.

You are never lost when you can see the temple. The temple will provide direction for you and your family in a world filled with chaos. It is an eternal guidepost which will help you from getting lost in the “mist

of darkness.”¹ It is the house of the Lord.² It is a place where covenants are made and eternal ordinances are performed.

Turning to the temple

In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin directed the Saints of his time and place to gather, “every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple.”³ As Church members, we have recently received counsel from modern-day prophets which, if followed, will turn the doors of our homes more fully towards the temple.

The First Presidency has invited “adult members to have a current temple recommend and visit the temple more often” where time and circumstance permit and encouraged members “to replace some leisure activities with temple service.” They also encouraged “newer members and youth of the Church who are 12 years of age and older to live worthy to assist in this great work by serving as proxies for baptisms and confirmations.”⁴ Even our young children have been encouraged to visit the temple grounds and touch the temple.⁵ President Thomas S. Monson once counseled, “As we touch the temple, the temple will touch us.”⁶

We are blessed to live in a temple-building dispensation in which 146 temples have been dedicated or announced.⁷ Under the definition of “Temple” in the Bible Dictionary, we read the following: “It is the most holy of any place of worship on the earth,” followed by this insightful statement: “Only the home can compare with the temple in sacredness.”⁸ For me, this suggests a sacred relationship between the temple and the home. Not only can we turn the doors of our homes to the temple, or the house of the Lord; we can make our homes a “house of the Lord.”

The temple and the home

Recently in a stake conference, all present were invited by the visiting authority, Elder Glen Jensen, an Area Seventy, to take a virtual tour of their homes using their spiritual eyes. I would like to invite each of you to do this also. Wherever your home may be and whatever its configuration, the application of eternal gospel principles within its walls is universal. Let's begin. Imagine that you are opening your front door and walking inside your home. What do you see, and how do you feel? Is it a place of love, peace, and refuge from the world, as is the temple? Is it clean and orderly? As you walk through the rooms of your home, do you see uplifting images which include appropriate pictures of the temple and the Savior? Is your bedroom or sleeping area a place for personal prayer? Is your gathering area or kitchen a place where food is prepared and enjoyed together, allowing uplifting conversation and family time? Are scriptures found in a room where the family can study, pray, and learn together? Can you find your personal gospel study space? Does the music you hear or the entertainment you see, online or otherwise, offend the Spirit? Is the conversation uplifting and without contention? That concludes our tour. Perhaps you, as I, found a few spots that need some "home improvement"—hopefully not an "extreme home makeover."

Whether our living space is large or small, humble or extravagant, there is a place for each of these gospel priorities in each of our homes.

In order to keep the temple and those who attend it sacred and worthy, the Lord has established standards through His servants, the prophets. We may be well advised to consider together, in family council, standards for our homes to keep them sacred and to allow them to be a "house of the Lord." The admonition to "establish . . . a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house

of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God"⁹ provides divine insight into the type of home the Lord would have us build. Doing such begins the construction of a "spiritual mansion" in which we all may reside regardless of our worldly circumstance—a home filled with treasure that "neither moth nor rust doth corrupt."¹⁰

There exists a righteous unity between the temple and the home. Understanding the eternal nature of the temple will draw you to your family; understanding the eternal nature of the family will draw you to the temple. President Howard W. Hunter stated, "In the ordinances of the temple, the foundations of the eternal family are sealed in place."¹¹

President Boyd K. Packer counseled: "Say the word *temple*. Say it quietly and reverently. Say it over and over again. *Temple. Temple. Temple.* Add the word *holy. Holy Temple.* Say it as though it were capitalized, no matter where it appears in the sentence.

"Temple. One other word is equal in importance to a Latter-day Saint. *Home.* Put the words *holy temple* and *home* together, and you have described the house of the Lord!"¹²

Preparing for eternal blessings

Last year Primary children gathered, thousands of them, from around the world in each of their wards and branches, singing to their families and ward members as part of the Primary sacrament meeting presentation. They sang of desire, promises, and preparation. The things of which they sang begin in sacred homes and continue in sacred temples. I think you will hear the tune in your hearts as I read the words:

I love to see the temple.
I'm going there someday
To feel the Holy Spirit,
To listen and to pray.

For the temple is a house of God,
A place of love and beauty.
I'll prepare myself while I am young;
This is my sacred duty.

I love to see the temple.
I'll go inside someday.
I'll cov'nant with my Father;
I'll promise to obey.
For the temple is a holy place
Where we are sealed together.
As a child of God, I've learned this
truth:
A fam'ly is forever.¹³

President Boyd K. Packer stated, "The ultimate purpose of all we teach is to unite parents and children in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are happy at home, sealed in an eternal marriage, linked to their generations, and assured of exaltation in the presence of our Heavenly Father."¹⁴

I testify to you that the application of these principles will help turn the doors of your home to the temple, or house of the Lord, and more fully allow you to make your sacred home a house of the Lord.

I conclude where I began, with the words of an innocent child: "You are never lost when you can see the temple." And I add my testimony of the sacred nature of our homes and of the Lord's temples. I know that God is our loving Heavenly Father. I bear witness of Jesus Christ and of His role as our Savior and Redeemer and of living prophets authorized to exercise all priesthood keys from Joseph Smith to Thomas S. Monson. I do so in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Nephi 8:24.
2. See Topical Guide, "Temple, House of the Lord," 519; "Temple, House of the Lord," in Guide to the Scriptures, at scriptures.lds.org.
3. Mosiah 2:6.
4. First Presidency letter, Mar. 11, 2003.
5. See Thomas S. Monson, "Finding Peace," *Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 5–6.
6. In JoAnn Jolley, "A Shining Beacon on a Hill: Jordan River Temple Is Dedicated," *Ensign*, Jan. 1982, 77: "Early in the week, Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Quorum of the Twelve suggested deep spiritual meaning in the physical presence of the temple. He recounted the late Elder Matthew Cowley's story about a grandfather who took his small granddaughter on a birthday visit to the Salt Lake Temple grounds. With permission of the groundskeeper, they walked to the large doors of the temple. He suggested that she place her hand on the temple wall and then on the door, saying tenderly to her, 'Remember that this day you touched the temple. One day you will enter this door.' His special gift to his granddaughter was an appreciation for the House of the Lord. Likewise, counseled Elder Monson, 'As we touch the temple, the temple will touch us.'"
7. See "Temples around the World," at temples.lds.org. Click on "Chronological."
8. Bible Dictionary, "Temple," 781.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 88:119.
10. See Matthew 6:19–20; 3 Nephi 13:19–20.
11. Howard W. Hunter, "A Temple-Motivated People," *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 2.
12. Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 24; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 20–21.
13. "I Love to See the Temple," *Children's Songbook*, 95.
14. Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 8; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 8.

President Eyring

The choir and congregation will now sing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." At the conclusion of the singing, Elders José A. Teixeira and F. Michael Watson of the Seventy will address us. They will be followed by Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang
"Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

Elder José A. Teixeira

Gifts to help us navigate our life

Our Heavenly Father has a plan for us, a plan of happiness. His plan is centered on the Lord Jesus Christ and His Atonement. Following the teachings and example of Jesus Christ will enable us to understand more fully our part in that plan.

In the first chapter of the book of Moses, we find a short but precious statement that simply outlines God's work—namely, “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”¹

In our life's journey to return to and become more like our Father, we are not left alone. God has given us the necessary gifts to help us in our mortal experience.

“Spiritual gifts are blessings or abilities given by God to His children.”² These gifts help us navigate our lives toward eternal goals.

What a comfort it is to know that there is a plan providing us with a Savior, Jesus Christ.³ His sacrifice makes it possible for all people who comply with His gospel teachings to be forgiven through repentance. What a comfort it is to know that help is available for us to succeed in our endeavors to return to live with our Father in Heaven. What a comfort it is to know that we are not alone sailing uncharted waters as we go through life's experiences.

The power to choose

One gift that will help us navigate our lives is the gift He has given to all, *the ability and power to choose*.

Our choices have the undeniable power of transforming our lives. This gift is an extraordinary sign of trust in us and simultaneously a cherished personal responsibility to use wisely. Our Father in Heaven respects our freedom to choose and will never force us to do what is right, nor will He impede us from making mediocre

choices.⁴ His invitation, however, concerning this important and vital gift is clearly expressed in the scriptures: “But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.”⁵

The words “to do good continually” depict well the standard we need to apply as we use our agency.

Choices have consequences attached, which may or may not be manifested immediately after our decisions. Using the spiritual gifts we have been given is paramount in order to remain on the right course.

GPS receivers and our consciences

Recently I used a pocket-size GPS receiver; this is an incredible device which consists of an antenna tuned to the frequencies transmitted by satellites high above the earth, along with a screen indicating my current position on earth.

In the last few decades these kinds of devices have become widely used for scientific purposes, mapmaking, land surveying, and more recently to keep people from getting lost when driving!

Throughout history, mankind has tried to keep itself from being lost. In my home country of Portugal, for instance, during the period of the discoveries in the 15th century, navigators “from Lisbon's shore, thro' seas where sail was never spread before”⁶ used the best possible maps and reading of the stars in the night sky, along with advanced sailing vessels for that time, to find their destination. In spite of all of this, it was not an easy task for those navigators to sail against adverse winds, and many times they wandered endlessly before finding their way in the vast sea.

In contrast, today with this GPS receiver, I can always have simultaneous answers to questions such as:

- Where am I?
- Where am I going?
- What's the best way to get there?
- When will I get there?

With this small device, I feel a great sense of security when driving, and I trust that it will take me with extraordinary precision and accuracy where I want to go.

I remember one day, however, as I drove into an underground parking lot, I was introduced to a new feature of this device—a warning voice struck me: “Lost satellite reception.” The concrete structures that surrounded me had interrupted the satellite signal and caused the device to lose connection.

As I came back again into the open air, I also realized that extra time was required while the device recaptured the needed signal.

We too have within us a “GPS” allowing us to know at all times what is right and what is wrong, as well as assisting us in making correct choices.

“We are born with a natural capacity to distinguish between right and wrong because of the Light of Christ that is given to every person (D&C 84:46). This faculty is called conscience. The possession of it makes us responsible beings.”⁷

Additionally, as members of the Church we have been given *the gift of the Holy Ghost to comfort, protect, and guide us*.⁸

However, like other faculties, our consciences may become inert through sin or misuse.⁹ If we become desensitized to the things of God in our lives, we too lose reception of the signal needed to guide us. Keeping the commandments is our best assurance to maintain a strong signal with the Divine.

President Thomas S. Monson, our beloved prophet, said, “Our lives will depend upon the decisions which we make—for decisions determine destiny.”¹⁰

I bear my witness that choosing good eventually leads to happiness, while wrong choices drag us down to unhappiness.¹¹ Learning to choose that which is good and keeping the commandments will create a pattern that will help us to:

- Attain fulfillment in life;
- Become more like our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ; and
- Qualify to inherit all the blessings promised to the faithful.

Belief in the words of the prophets

Another gift that will help us navigate our lives is *the capacity to believe the words of those who testify of Jesus Christ*.¹²

Through prophets in every age, including our own, God has revealed His plan of happiness for individuals and families. Those who follow the prophets receive the blessings God has promised.

We can always trust the living prophets; their teachings reflect the word and will of the Lord. “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”¹³

The lyrics of a Primary song admonish us to:

Follow the prophet,
Follow the prophet; don't go astray.
Follow the prophet, . . .
Follow the prophet; he knows the way.

. . . We can get direction all along our way,
If we heed the prophets—follow what they say.¹⁴

I testify that our Father in Heaven is mindful of each one of us, that He listens to and answers our prayers, and that He communicates with His prophets to guide us. As we develop our faith to believe and live the words of prophets, we will strengthen our testimony of the plan of

happiness and the central role of Jesus Christ in it.

Through the power to choose and the inherent capacity to believe the words of those who testify of Jesus Christ, we will be able to cross the great waters of life and reach our eternal destiny.

We have been taught this weekend by prophets, seers, and revelators. I am grateful for the guidance our Father in Heaven has extended to us and for His Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. I testify that They live and love us, and as we abide by the teachings we have received, we will make good choices, we will not be lost, and we will reach our eternal home. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moses 1:39.
2. "Spiritual Gifts," at gospeltopics.lds.org.

3. See "God has a plan for your life," at www.mormon.org/mormonorg/eng/basic-beliefs/heavenly-father-s-plan-of-happiness/god-has-a-plan-for-your-life.
4. See "God has a plan for your life," at www.mormon.org.
5. Moroni 7:13.
6. Luis de Camões, *The Lusiad*, book I, stanza 1, trans. William Julius Mickle (1776).
7. "Conscience," in Guide to the Scriptures, at scriptures.lds.org.
8. See Acts 2:38.
9. See "Conscience," in Guide to the Scriptures, at scriptures.lds.org.
10. Thomas S. Monson, "Decisions Determine Destiny," *New Era*, Nov. 1979, 4.
11. See "God has a plan for your life," at www.mormon.org.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:14.
13. Amos 3:7.
14. "Follow the Prophet," *Children's Songbook*, 110–11.

Elder F. Michael Watson

Guided by the wisdom of others

During my growing-up years in the small farming community of Spring City, Utah, an opportunity afforded itself each summer to be with my father alone for two weeks herding sheep in the mountain range of the Manti-La Sal. On one occasion the fog rested heavily in the area to the extent that you could not see your outstretched hand in front of you, and the evening was drawing nigh.

My father suggested that I return to camp, and he would soon follow. I remember questioning how I would be able to find the camp amidst the fog. My father simply said to me, "Give the horse the reins, and he will get you to camp." Following this counsel, I loosened my grip on the reins, and with encouragement to the horse, the journey began. At times I would be struck in the face by a low-hanging limb

I couldn't see or have my leg brush close to a tree. Eventually, the horse came to a complete stop, and the silhouette of the camp was in view.

Sometimes we may not always be able to immediately find the desired way before us, but the wisdom of those who have gone before, coupled with the wisdom of those who are with us still, will be our guide if we let them have the reins.

The voice of His servants

"Understandest thou what thou readest?" was the question asked by Philip of one who was diligently searching the scriptures.

The response came in the form of a question: "How can I, except some man should guide me?"¹

The answer to these searching questions comes from the prophets throughout

ages past who taught the importance of searching the scriptures, along with a promise: "Whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived."²

In each dispensation, the Lord has given commandments to the prophets "that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled."³ Doctrine and Covenants section I constitutes the Lord's preface to the doctrines, covenants, and commandments given in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. Of specific mention are verses 37–38:

"Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.

"What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same."

It is the voice of seven of the Lord's servants of which I speak today. In March 1970, a long hoped-for desire to be of service to the Lord's chosen servants commenced. From the very outset, opportunities were provided to be directly involved with the Brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve and subsequently with members of the First Presidency for almost four decades. It was during these formative years that an understanding of "my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled" began to swell in my heart.

Important admonition has been given in general conferences of yesteryear and will continue to be expounded by those who have the wisdom of ages past, which allows our hearts to burn within us. It will be in following such counsel that we must be strong, never give up, and endure to the end.

Let me share the direction and counsel given by these prophets of God.

Joseph Fielding Smith

For example, it was President Joseph Fielding Smith who often quoted the words set forth in the 24th chapter of Psalms, wherein a question is asked, an answer given, and a blessing promised to the faithful.

The question: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?"

The answer: "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."

The promise: "He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."⁴

Harold B. Lee

President Harold B. Lee in general conference counseled us to give heed to the words and commandments the Lord shall give through His prophet: "You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political views . . . [or] your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But if [we] listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord himself, with patience and faith, the promise is that ' . . . the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory.'"⁵

Prior to his passing in December 1973, President Lee, speaking to an assembled group of Church employees and their families, posed the question after giving a history of the Church's welfare program: "Do you believe these prophets knew what they were talking about?" Later in the same address, concerning the Brethren's counsel to guard against the permissiveness invading the home through inappropriate literature and television, he asked, "Are you too close to the Brethren [so that you] think of them not as prophets but as men just guessing [such counsel] might be a good thing?"⁶

Spencer W. Kimball

It was President Spencer W. Kimball who in his writings provided us the comforting words that there is a miracle of forgiveness and God will forgive. In another setting, concerning the unexpected challenges which we may face, President Kimball cautioned us, if individually given the power to alter life-changing moments, would we have modified the events at Carthage Jail which resulted in the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith? And more importantly, with such uncontrolled power, what might we have done in the decisive moment of Gethsemane and the words spoken, “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done”?⁷

Ezra Taft Benson

Each morning in the meeting of the First Presidency, the Brethren take turns praying. I always liked to listen to President Ezra Taft Benson pray. His prayers were almost entirely in thankfulness instead of asking for blessings. Of Another Testament of Jesus Christ, President Benson reiterated the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith “that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”⁸ He admonished us to follow the Savior, who said, “Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life.”⁹

Howard W. Hunter

During his nine-month period of service as President of the Church, we all fell in love with the innate goodness of President Howard W. Hunter, who issued invitations for members of the Church to:

“Live with ever more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ,

especially the love and hope and compassion He displayed. . . .

“... Establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants. It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church be temple worthy.”¹⁰

Gordon B. Hinckley

President Gordon B. Hinckley stated: “I have not spoken face to face with all of the prophets of this dispensation. I was not acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith, nor did I ever hear him speak. [However,] my grandfather, who as a young man lived in Nauvoo, did hear him and testified of his divine calling as the great prophet of this dispensation.”¹¹

President Hinckley bore witness of the First Vision, when young Joseph Smith went to pray in a grove and received his answer through divine revelation from both the Father and the Son.

President Hinckley’s passion with the building of temples and the sacred work performed therein will be a polar star for each of us to follow.

Thomas S. Monson

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has reemphasized again the hoped-for desire of the First Presidency who in 1839 gave the direction we should constantly seek even today: “Upon your diligence, your perseverance and faithfulness, the soundness of the doctrines which you preach, the moral precepts that you advance and practice . . . hang the destinies of the human family.”¹²

It is President Monson whom we sustain as the prophet, seer, and revelator and who serves as the resounding voice to the widow, the fatherless, and to all who stand in need. He has truly exemplified in his life the pattern of the Master and the

sincere desire to always be found in His service. It is President Monson who is the Lord's mouthpiece and whose counsel and direction we are admonished to follow. In a very real sense, the Master speaks to us through His prophet. I know, and have recorded in meetings of the Brethren assembled, this to be true.

"His servants the prophets"

As one who has been taught at the feet of living prophets and of these latter-day witnesses whom I have known and love, I testify in all truthfulness, as members of this Church heed the words and commandments the Lord gave to the prophets of the testaments and followed by the Lord's prophet even today, we will more fully understand that "surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."¹³

Of these truths and that God is in the heavens, that Jesus is the Christ, and of this The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which has prophets, seers, and revelators to guide us, I bear solemn witness in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Acts 8:30–31.
2. Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 1:18.
4. Psalm 24:3–5.
5. Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 152; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970, 126.
6. Harold B. Lee, Christmas devotional for employees of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Dec. 13, 1973; in *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 298.
7. Luke 22:42; see Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 100.
8. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:461.
9. 3 Nephi 15:9.
10. Quoted in Jay M. Todd, "President Howard W. Hunter: Fourteenth President of the Church," *Ensign*, July 1994, 4–5.
11. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 73; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 50.
12. *History of the Church*, 3:395; for further information on this epistle, see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation* (1950), 48–49.
13. Amos 3:7.

Elder L. Tom Perry

A lost sheep

Many years ago I was driving along University Avenue near the mouth of Provo Canyon when I saw ahead of me the traffic slowing down. Up ahead there were police cars with their lights flashing, a fire truck, and several search and rescue vehicles all huddled together, blocking the road into Provo Canyon. At first I was annoyed, since it seemed like we might be there for a long time. I was also curious—what was causing all the commotion?

As I looked up the rock face along the east side of the entrance to Provo Canyon,

I saw some men climbing. I assumed they were the search and rescue people. What were they climbing to? Eventually I saw it. Somehow a ewe, a lost sheep, had made her way about 25 feet up the rock face, and she was stranded there. She was not a mountain goat or mountain sheep, just a white ewe separated from a shepherd's flock.

As I had nothing else to do, I searched the rock face for a way up to where the ewe stood. I could not for the life of me figure out how she ever got there. Nevertheless, she was there, and all the commotion in front of me was focused on her rescue. To

this day, I don't know the end of the story, since the police figured out a way to get the traffic moving again.

As I drove away, a concern bothered me. While the search and rescue personnel were certainly well intentioned, how would the ewe react to them? I'm sure they had a plan for how they would calm her—perhaps they would shoot her with a tranquilizer dart from a close distance so they could catch her before she fell. Knowing nothing of their plan but knowing a little about how animals react to being cornered by strangers, I worried about the feasibility of their rescue effort. And then I wondered, "Where is the shepherd?" Certainly he would have the best chance of approaching the ewe without alarming her. The shepherd's calming voice and helping hand were what the situation needed, but he seemed to be missing in action.

Importance of member missionaries

As members of the Church, sometimes we seem to be missing in action, just like this shepherd. Consider for a moment what President Monson told the newly called mission presidents at the 2008 seminar for new mission presidents. He said: "There is . . . no substitute for a member-oriented proselyting program. Tracting will not substitute for it. Golden questions will not substitute for it. A member-oriented program is the key to success, and it works wherever we try it" ("Motivating Missionaries," June 22, 2008, 8).

Viewed in this light, member missionaries—both you and I—are the shepherds, and the full-time missionaries, like the search and rescue team, are trying to do something almost impossible for them to do alone. Certainly the full-time missionaries will continue to do the best they can, but wouldn't it be better if you and I stepped up to do a job that is rightfully ours and for which we are better suited

since we know personally those who are lost and need to be rescued?

I would like to focus on three objectives for members of the Church found in the Doctrine and Covenants. Each of these encourages us not to be missing in action when friends, neighbors, and family members need our help. This should include those who have fallen away, the less active. All of us should be better member missionaries.

We must warn our neighbors

In section 88, verse 81 of the Doctrine and Covenants, we read, "And it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor." I have had the privilege of traveling to many of the stakes of the Church to encourage the growth and development of ward missions. It has been a very rewarding and spiritual experience for me. I have discovered in these travels, and a recent survey has confirmed the fact, that over one-half of the people in the United States and Canada have little or no awareness of our practices and beliefs. I am certain the percentage would be much larger in other parts of the world. This same survey also showed that when non-members interact with faithful members of the Church over an extended period of time or are exposed to clear and accurate information regarding Church beliefs and doctrines, their attitudes become positive and open.

The Church has over 50,000 full-time missionaries serving around the world. *Preach My Gospel* has helped make them the best teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ we have ever had in the history of the Church. Unfortunately most of our full-time missionaries spend more of their time trying to find people rather than teaching them. I view our full-time missionaries as an underutilized teaching resource. If you and I did more of the finding for the full-time missionaries and freed

them up to spend more time teaching the people we find, great things would begin to happen. We're missing a golden opportunity to grow the Church when we wait for our full-time missionaries to warn our neighbors instead of doing it ourselves.

It should be "with great earnestness" (D&C 123:14) that we bring the light of the gospel to those who are searching for answers the plan of salvation has to offer. Many are concerned for their families. Some are looking for security in a world of changing values. Our opportunity is to give them hope and courage and to invite them to come with us and join those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord's gospel is on earth and will bless their lives here and in the eternities to come.

The gospel is centered on the Atonement of our Lord and Savior. The Atonement provides the power to wash away sins, to heal, and to grant eternal life. All the imponderable blessings of the Atonement can be given only to those who live the principles and receive the ordinances of the gospel—faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end. Our great missionary message to the world is that all mankind is invited to be rescued and to enter the fold of the Good Shepherd, even Jesus Christ.

Our missionary message is strengthened by the knowledge of the Restoration. We know that God speaks to His prophets today, just as He did anciently. We also know that His gospel is administered with the power and authority of the restored priesthood. No other message has such great, eternal significance to everyone living on the earth today. All of us need to teach this message to others with power and conviction. It is the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost that testifies through us of the miracle of the Restoration, but first we must open our mouths and testify. We must warn our neighbors.

We must open our mouths

This leads me to the second scripture I want to share with you from the Doctrine and Covenants. While verse 81 of section 88 teaches us that missionary work becomes the responsibility of each of us as soon as we have been warned, verses 7–10 of section 33 teach us to open our mouths.

Verse 7 leaves no doubt in anyone's mind who has memorized section 4 of the Doctrine and Covenants that the Lord is talking to us about missionary work: "Yea, verily, verily, I say unto you, that the field is white already to harvest; wherefore, thrust in your sickles, and reap with all your might, mind, and strength."

Then comes the injunction—three times—to open our mouths:

"Open your mouths and they shall be filled, and you shall become even as Nephi of old, who journeyed from Jerusalem in the wilderness.

"Yea, open your mouths and spare not, and you shall be laden with sheaves upon your backs, for lo, I am with you.

"Yea, open your mouths and they shall be filled, saying: Repent, repent, and prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (verses 8–10).

What would each of us say if we had to open our mouth three times? If I may, I would like to offer a suggestion. First and foremost, we should declare our belief in Jesus Christ and His Atonement. His redeeming act blesses all mankind with the gift of immortality and the potential of enjoying God's greatest gift to man, the gift of eternal life.

The second time we open our mouths, we should tell in our own words the story of the First Vision—that is, our knowledge of a boy not quite 15 years of age who went into a grove of trees and, after sincere and humble prayer, had the heavens open to him. After centuries of confusion, the

true nature of the Godhead and God's true teachings were revealed to the world.

The third time we open our mouths, let us testify of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon complements the Bible in giving us a greater understanding of the doctrines of our Savior's gospel. The Book of Mormon is the convincing evidence that Joseph Smith is truly a prophet of God. If the Book of Mormon is true, there was a restoration of the priesthood. If the Book of Mormon is true, then with the power of that priesthood, Joseph Smith restored the Church of Jesus Christ.

Faithful shepherds experience joy

I have just concluded the book of Alma in my current reading of the Book of Mormon. Near the close of Alma's great message to the Church in Zarahemla, he said:

"For what shepherd is there among you having many sheep doth not watch over them, that the wolves enter not and devour his flock? And behold, if a wolf enter his flock doth he not drive him out? Yea, and at the last, if he can, he will destroy him.

"And now I say unto you that the good shepherd doth call after you; and if you will hearken unto his voice he will bring you into his fold, and ye are his sheep; and he commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed" (Alma 5:59–60).

The Savior is the Good Shepherd, and we are all called to His service. The ewe on the side of the rock face along the entry to Provo Canyon and these words of Alma remind me of the question the Savior asked in the 15th chapter of Luke: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" (verse 4).

Usually when I think of herding sheep, I think of the requirement, or stewardship,

of the shepherd to do *everything* he can for *all* of his sheep. This experience, however, reminded me that it is the parable of the *lost* sheep, and my thoughts turned to the precarious nature of that one lost ewe, all alone and unable to take another step up the rock face and equally unable to turn around and find her way down. How frantic and hopeless she must have felt, completely powerless to rescue herself, one step away from certain disaster.

It is important for each of us to ponder how it feels to be lost and what it means to be a "spiritual" shepherd who will leave the 99 to find the one who is lost. Such shepherds may need the expertise and assistance of the search and rescue team, but they are present, accounted for, and climbing right beside them to save those who are infinitely valued in the sight of God, for they are His children. Such shepherds respond to the final injunction to be a member missionary that I want to share with you from the Doctrine and Covenants:

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

"And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!" (D&C 18:15–16).

As the scripture also teaches, such shepherds experience inexpressible joy. I bear witness to this fact in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Eyring

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from the Salt Lake area institutes of religion, and the priesthood choir from Brigham Young University–Idaho and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also

extend thanks to all who have participated in any way in these proceedings.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Thomas S. Monson, our beloved prophet. Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing

"God Be with You Till We Meet Again." After the music, the benediction will be offered by Elder Robert C. Oaks of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned for six months.

President Thomas S. Monson

Expressions of gratitude and counsel

My beloved brothers and sisters, my heart is full and my feelings tender as we conclude this great general conference.

We have been richly blessed as we have listened to the counsel and testimonies of those who have spoken to us. I believe we are all more determined to live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I express my sincere thanks to each one who participated in the conference, including those Brethren who offered prayers.

The music has been magnificent. How grateful I am for those blessed with musical talents who are willing to share their talents with others. I am reminded of the scripture found in the Doctrine and Covenants: "For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads."¹

May we long remember that which we have heard during this conference. I remind you that the messages will be printed in next month's *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines. I urge you to study the messages and to ponder their teachings and then to apply them in your life.

I want you to know how much I love and appreciate my devoted counselors, President Henry B. Eyring and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf. They are men of wisdom and understanding. Their service is invaluable. I love and support my Brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. During this conference we sustained a new member

of that Quorum. He is completely dedicated to the work of the Lord, and I testify that he is the man our Heavenly Father wants to fill this position at this time.

I express my love to the members of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric. They serve selflessly and so effectively. Similarly, I pay tribute to the general auxiliary officers. In accordance with our policy of rotation, we have sustained new general presidencies of the Young Men and of the Sunday School. We look forward to working with them. We thank those who were released from these positions at this conference and who served so faithfully in these capacities.

My brothers and sisters, may we strive to live closer to the Lord. May we remember to "pray always lest [we] enter into temptation."²

To you parents, express your love to your children. Pray for them that they may be able to withstand the evils of the world. Pray that they may grow in faith and testimony. Pray that they may pursue lives of goodness and of service to others.

Children, let your parents know you love them. Let them know how much you appreciate all they have done and continue to do for you.

Avoid pornography

Now, a word of caution to all—both young and old, both male and female. We live at a time when the adversary is using every means possible to ensnare us in his web of deceit, trying desperately to take us

down with him. There are many pathways along which he entices us to go—pathways that can lead to our destruction. Advances in many areas that can be used for good can also be used to speed us along those heinous pathways.

I feel to mention one in particular, and that is the Internet. On one hand, it provides nearly limitless opportunities for acquiring useful and important information. Through it we can communicate with others around the world. The Church itself has a wonderful Web site, filled with valuable and uplifting information and priceless resources.

On the other hand, however—and extremely alarming—are the reports of the number of individuals who are utilizing the Internet for evil and degrading purposes, the viewing of pornography being the most prevalent of these purposes. My brothers and sisters, involvement in such will literally destroy the spirit. Be strong. Be clean. Avoid such degrading and destructive types of content at all costs—wherever they may be! I sound this warning to everyone, everywhere. I add—particularly to the young people—that this includes pornographic images transmitted via cell phones.

My beloved friends, under no circumstances allow yourselves to become trapped in the viewing of pornography, one of the most effective of Satan's enticements. And if you have allowed yourself to become involved in this behavior, cease now. Seek the help you need to overcome and to change the direction of your life. Take the steps necessary to get back on the strait and narrow, and then stay there.

May we say, with Joshua of old, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."³

Temple work and humanitarian aid

Now, my brothers and sisters, we have built temples throughout the world and will continue to do so. To you who are worthy and able to attend the temple, I would admonish you to go often. The temple is a place where we can find peace. There we receive a renewed dedication to the gospel and a strengthened resolve to keep the commandments.

What a privilege it is to be able to go to the temple, where we may experience the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of the Lord. Great service is given when we perform vicarious ordinances for those who have gone beyond the veil. In many cases we do not know those for whom we perform the work. We expect no thanks, nor do we have the assurance that they will accept that which we offer. However, we serve, and in that process we attain that which comes of no other effort: we literally become saviors on Mount Zion. As our Savior gave His life as a vicarious sacrifice for us, so we, in some small measure, do the same when we perform proxy work in the temple for those who have no means of moving forward unless something is done for them by those of us here on the earth.

I am deeply grateful that as a church we continue to extend humanitarian aid where there is great need. We have done much in this regard and have blessed the lives of thousands upon thousands of our Father's children who are not of our faith as well as those who are. We intend to continue to help wherever such is needed. We express gratitude to you for your contributions in this regard.

Until we meet again

How grateful I am, my brothers and sisters, for the Restoration of the gospel in this dispensation and for all the blessings

that have come into my life and into your lives as a result. We are a blessed people, for we have the sure knowledge that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ.

May heaven's blessings be with you. May your homes be filled with harmony and love. May you constantly nourish your testimonies that they might be a protection to you against the adversary.

As your humble servant, I desire with all my heart to do God's will and to serve Him and to serve you.

Now, my brothers and sisters, conference is over. As we return to our homes, may we do so safely.

I love you. I pray for you. I would ask that you would remember me and all the

General Authorities in your prayers. Until we meet again in six months' time, I ask the Lord's blessings to be upon all of us, and I do it in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord, our Savior, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 25:12.
2. 3 Nephi 18:18.
3. Joshua 24:15.

The choir sang "God Be with You Till We Meet Again."

Elder Robert C. Oaks offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Mack Wilberg and Edgar Thompson directed the choir. Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Andrew Unsworth, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A combined choir from the Salt Lake area institutes of religion provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Stephen P. Schank and Richard T. Decker directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A priesthood choir from Brigham Young University–Idaho provided the music for the priesthood session. Kevin Brower and Randall Kempton directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Andrew Unsworth, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

Brook P. Hales

Clerk of the Conference

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